

Summary Report: *Girls Not Brides* member and other activities to highlight child marriage on inaugural International Day of the Girl Child, 11 October 2012

The first ever International Day of the Girl Child was embraced globally as a moment to celebrate the girl child and to call for greater action to protect her rights, dignity and enable her to fulfil her potential. As a principal barrier to the development of girls and their wider communities, child marriage was the predominant issue discussed around the world on Day of the Girl.

In total, more than 50 *Girls Not Brides* members carried out activities on Day of the Girl across 29 countries, and national partnerships to address child marriage were launched in Turkey and Tanzania. The global scope of the activities underlined that child marriage is a truly universal problem and emphasised that there is a growing global movement determined to see an end to this practice.

Click [here](#) to view all these activities in a Google map or continue below for a full summary.

In the following report you will find:

- [A summary of *Girls Not Brides* and global activities on Day of the Girl](#)
- [A summary of individual member activities on Day of the Girl](#)
 - Member activities [internationally](#)
 - Member activities in [Africa](#)
 - Member activities in [Europe](#)
 - Member activities in [North America](#)
 - Member activities in [South Asia](#)

Summary of activities globally

UN Secretary-General: “let us do our part to let girls be girls, not brides”

The United Nations chose child marriage as its theme to mark the day and UN agencies – UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women – each emphasised the urgent need to address the practice at an event cosponsored by *Girls Not Brides*. In addition to the UN agencies, [this high-level panel](#) featured Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the State Minister for Women and Children’s Affairs from Bangladesh and an inspiring youth activist from Niger. The panel brought to the attention of approximately 500 UN diplomats and other representatives in the room the importance of addressing child marriage.

The call was led by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who stated:

“I urge Governments, community and religious leaders, civil society, the private sector, and families – especially men and boys, to promote the rights of girls... Let us be guided by the theme of today’s observance – “my life, my right, end child marriage” – and let us do our part to let girls be girls, not brides.”

UNFPA launches report on costs of inaction on child marriage

UNFPA launched a [new report](#) underlining the impact on the lives of girls if the international community continues to largely ignore the practice of child marriage. The report found that if current trends continue, by 2020 some 142 million girls will be married by their 18th birthday. UNFPA also committed \$20 million to child marriage programming. At a press conference to announce the launch of the report, Mary Robinson of The Elders called for child marriage to be used as an indicator to measure future global development and sustainability goals.

The launch of the report was accompanied by the opening of an exhibition at UN Headquarters of the [photos of Stephanie Sinclair](#), who has worked for a decade to capture the life of child brides around the world.

The Netherlands, WHO and UNFPA convene child marriage meeting at UN in Geneva

At the United Nations in Geneva, the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands, WHO and UNFPA convened a meeting to build a shared understanding of the scale of child marriage, the factors that contribute to it, its health and social effects, and ongoing initiatives to prevent it. **The meeting was cosponsored by the Permanent Missions of Canada, Bangladesh, Denmark, Ethiopia and Ghana, as well as the World YWCA and Girls Not Brides.** Participants included representatives from country missions to the UN in Geneva, international organisations and civil society.

Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health issue a ‘Knowledge Summary’ titled ‘Reaching child brides’

The [summary](#), co-branded with *Girls Not Brides*, highlights the importance of a cross-sectoral approach to mitigate the negative impact of child marriage and calls for targeted interventions to improve the health and well-being of married adolescent girls. The summary also emphasised the need for greater evidence generation to identify successful programmes and to support implementation on a wide-scale. ***Girls Not Brides* members are welcome to use this summary to support their advocacy efforts.**

UN human rights experts issue a joint statement on child marriage

In a rare move, a group of UN human rights experts issued a [joint statement](#) calling on States “to increase the age of marriage to 18 years of age for girls and boys without exception and adopt urgent measures to prevent child marriage”. They added that this “should go hand in hand with public awareness raising campaigns to highlight the nature and harm caused by forced and early marriages and community programmes to help detect, provide advice, rehabilitation and shelter where necessary. In addition, birth registration should be made universal to support proof of age and prevent forced early marriage.”

Secretary Clinton announces US Government initiatives to prevent child marriage

Following a meeting with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced new US Government initiatives to prevent child marriage and promote girls’ education around the world, including mandatory reporting on the rate of underage marriage in the State Department’s annual human rights reports. [Click here](#) for a full list of the State Department’s commitments.



Ford Foundation commits \$25million to tackle child marriage

The [Ford Foundation launched a 5-year \\$25 million commitment](#) to work with NGOs, governments, local communities and other funders to build the political will necessary to end child marriage, to support new research to determine successful interventions, and to expand girls’ access to resources and rights, including the right not to marry early. Ford will focus its work in Southern and West Africa, Central America and India and Egypt.

Child marriage is the dominant topic online on Day of the Girl

Online, child marriage was the predominant topic on Day of the Girl, encouraged by a Twitter and Facebook campaign led by *Girls Not Brides* members and an online discussion (Google+ Hangout) in which Mary Robinson of The Elders, Christy Turlington of Every Mother Counts, Anju Malhotra of UNICEF and Muhammad Shahzad Khan, a youth activist from Pakistan, took part. The Hangout has now been viewed over 1,000 times, which is impressive for a 30-minute online video. [Girls Not Brides members are welcome](#)

[to post this discussion](#) on their own websites or social media channels. *Girls Not Brides* posted blogs on a number of different websites, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's '[Impatient Optimists](#)' blog.

Launch of the Urgent African Campaign Against Child 'Marriage', facilitated by the Pan African Parliament, Africa Public Health Parliamentary Network, Africa MNCH Coalition and Partners

The Africa Public Health Parliamentary Network and Africa MNCH Coalition announced the launch of the 'Urgent African Campaign Against so called 'Child Marriage''. The stated aim of the campaign is to 'mobilise stakeholders' commitment and support to end this practice that negatively impacted on the health and development of this huge constituency of African girl children, adolescent girls and young women'. Ahead of the launch, Dr Rotimi Sankore, Coordinator of the Africa Public Health Alliance, called on parliamentarians to support the campaign, which includes a petition to Heads of State demanding abolition of 'child marriage' in Africa.

Summary of *Girls Not Brides* member activities

International



Day of the Girl saw the global launch of **Plan International's** 'Because I am a Girl' report, which focuses on barriers to girls' education, including child marriage. Plan country offices around the world celebrated the launch of the report, often working with fellow *Girls Not Brides* members, and used it as an opportunity to advocate for government action on child marriage. Blog: '[Because I am a Girl launch rocks the world](#)'

The report launch was supported by a global media campaign and numerous activities, including parades, workshops, roundtable discussions, community dialogues, speeches, turning major landmarks pink, etc. Plan's online campaign featured a 'Raise your hand' petition for girls' education, which has gained 700,000 supporters to date. A number of films were also launched to demonstrate the impact that marrying young has had on girls in India, Kenya, Nepal, Niger and Sierra Leone.

- The **Right to Education Project**, coordinated by **ActionAid** with Amnesty International and the Global Campaign for Education, released an [advocacy factsheet](#): 'At what Age?... Early marriage and the right to education'. The factsheet was developed for use by civil society organisations to advocate for improving legislation regarding the minimum age for marriage and the minimum age for leaving school.
- **Camfed** launched their short film '[Child Within](#)' featuring the stories of three child brides from rural Malawi. The launch of the film was accompanied by a social media campaign in the lead-up to Day of the Girl and a dedicated page on Camfed's new website.
- **CARE** launched a [microsite on child marriage](#), highlighting actions that the online community can take in support of efforts to end child marriage. CARE also re-launched its petition calling on the US government to make financial and programmatic commitments to address child marriage.
- **Human Rights Watch** released a [statement](#) calling on governments to adopt and implement legislation that sets the minimum age for marriage at 18. This message was echoed in an op-ed in the British newspaper [The Telegraph](#), in which HRW wrote that governments must also prioritise education and vocational training opportunities for married girls and women and should improve police support for girls who escape a violent marriage.

- In partnership with **10x10**, the **International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)** [launched a new video on child marriage](#) and published a series of online articles about its work with CARE to support child brides and unmarried adolescent girls through the TESFA project in Ethiopia.
- The Overseas Development Institute released a podcast on how to tackle the barriers, including child marriage, that prevent adolescent girls from accessing family planning. **Save the Children** and **Girls Not Brides** participated in the recorded discussion which is available to download [here](#).
- Ela Bhatt and Desmond Tutu of **The Elders** published an op-ed calling for urgent action to address child marriage. The Elders wrote that as new development goals to succeed the Millennium Development Goals are prepared, “the persistence of child marriage should be seen as one of the major barriers to the well-being of our human family”.
 - The op-ed was published in [The Times of India](#) (India), [Dawn](#) (Pakistan), [The Daily Mirror](#) (Sri Lanka), [The Daily Star](#) (Bangladesh), [The Independent](#) (UK), [The Huffington Post](#) (USA), [The Daily Maverick](#) (South Africa) and [Jeune Afrique](#) (pan Africa)
- The **White Ribbon Alliance** chose child marriage as its ‘[action of the month](#)’, encouraging its members and supporters to show their support for a world free of child marriage through a number of online activities.
- In addition to supporting *Girls Not Brides*’ social media campaign, **Women Deliver** marked Day of the Girl with the launch of [Catapult](#), a new online fundraising platform enabling users to donate directly to projects that support adolescent girls, including child brides.

Africa

Pan-African

- **Tostan** launched a blog series, ‘Spotlight on Girls’, featuring five stories of girl participants in the Tostan programme. The countries highlighted included: The Gambia, Senegal and Somalia. This was supported by 12 days of online engagement with supporters on Twitter and Facebook regarding Day of the Girl themes, in particular child marriage.

Cameroon

- In Bamenda, a region in north-west Cameroon, **Nkuma Fed-Fed** held a regional planning meeting with other NGOs to mobilise civil society, government officials and the private sector ahead of Day of the Girl. On 11 October, Nkumu Fed-Fed, in partnership with organisations including **Plan International**, presented speeches, plays, songs, dances and testimonies to highlight child marriage. These activities were reported by the Cameroon Tribune and Cameroon Radio Television.
- **Internap** hosted a radio panel discussion on the consequences of child marriage and its impact on HIV transmission. The panel was broadcast on Lebialem community radio and lines were open for the 50,000 listeners to call and participate. Internap also held an event at Menji Catholic Church, emphasising to the 800 strong congregation the devastating effects of child marriage.

Chad

- The **Association Jeunesse Anti Clivage** led a community sensitisation programme with girls vulnerable to early marriage. AJAC also held a debate on the dangers of early marriage at a female high school in NDjaména, to which 20 journalists were invited, and organised a press conference on child marriage. AJAC’s founder was invited to speak on national radio about Day of the Girl.

Democratic Republic of Congo

- **Programme intégré de santé de reproduction et familiale (PISRF)** led a community sensitisation campaign. This included placing articles on child marriage in local newspapers and an awareness-raising campaign where big, colourful umbrellas were used to attract the attention of decision-makers, police and others.

Ethiopia

- **EGLDAM** hosted an event with **Plan Ethiopia** and **ActionAid Ethiopia** at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital on 11 October. Elders, community and religious leaders and important personalities from areas with a high prevalence of child marriage were invited to the hospital to meet fistula patients. An open discussion was held among participants and patients, with the objective of giving a clear picture about the health and psychological consequences of child marriage.

Ivory Coast

- **ONG Génération Femme du 3ième Millénaire (GFM3)** held an awareness raising parade in the Western regions of the Ivory Coast.

Kenya

- **Akili Dada** held a mentoring session at a partner school in Nairobi, focusing on the challenges that the girl child faces on a daily basis. This event was supported by social media work.
- **Coexist Initiative** encouraged men and boys to embrace their role as advocates for girls' rights, using the opportunity of Day of the Girl to build the capacities and raise public awareness principally among men and boys regarding child marriage. Community and political leaders, religious and traditional leaders, youth representatives and other invited guests spoke to the public about the importance of girls' right to equal education and their fundamental freedoms. Several events including music and dance, poems, recitations, tug of war, joint soccer and athletics will take place. Coexist Initiative aims to mobilise a critical mass of empowered men and boys ready to play a key role in fostering gender parity and girls empowerment.

Malawi

- Brussels Mughogho, Country Director of **Every Child Malawi**, [was interviewed live on MBC TV](#) about child marriage in Malawi and steps that the government should take to address the practice. EveryChild Malawi also participated in a national public debate on the minimum age for marriage, which was presided over by the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, Anitta Kalinde.



CEGI Malawi conducted an event called "Together W - R Strong", which involved 56 young women and girls from various communities and was aimed at empowering girls and creating an enabling environment where every girl can have a say regarding her body and rights. Educational materials for working with communities to end child marriage were developed.

- **GENET Malawi** brought together 1,000 girls to celebrate Day of the Girl. Their documentary on forced early marriage was screened and activities including a debate, testimonies and motivational speeches, were also held.
- **Yoneco Malawi** held a press briefing on International Day of the Girl and a panel discussion about girls' rights on MBC Radio 1 and Capital FM. On Day of the Girl, YONEC led an SMS campaign targeting MPs, ministers, local leaders and the media on the rights of girls in Malawi.

Zambia

- **REAP Net** held a roundtable on child marriage with media. REAP also facilitated a letter writing campaign by a group of adolescent girls to the President about issues that affect their lives, including child marriage.

Zimbabwe

- **Tag a Life International** placed a number of articles in the Zimbabwean media about child marriage.

Europe

Belgium

- **Plan EU** coordinated a European Week of Action for Girls, which was supported by the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Martin Schulz, and highlighted child marriage as an obstacle to girls' rights. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, pointed to the work of the European External Action Service on combat harmful traditional practices like child marriage and spoke of the need for longer-term commitment to address this issue.

Turkey

- A *Girls Not Brides* national partnership was launched bringing together 44 organisations in Turkey committed to ending child marriage. Spokespeople from UNICEF and UNFPA attended the launch as well as the Head of Turkish Parliamentary Child Rights Commission, Prof. Dr. Türkan Dağoğlu. The launch was coordinated by **Flying Broom** with support from the Sabanci Foundation and was widely covered on television, radio and in newspapers.



UK



Independent Yemen Group made 100 dolls to send as gifts to the children of child brides in Yemen for Eid al adh'ha, a small step to raise awareness of child marriage in Yemen and elsewhere.

North America

USA

- Members of **Girls Not Brides USA** cooperated on a social media campaign to pressure the US government to make financial and programmatic commitments to end child marriage. This included a letter writing campaign organised by **Girl Up** and a series of coordinated messages on Twitter and Facebook.
- **10x10** launched a series of videos emphasising the change that can be unleashed if girls are enabled to complete their education. One of the videos focuses on the story of a child bride in Ethiopia. 10x10 also held events with partners around the world to stress the importance of education for girls. See [here](#) for highlights.
- **Advocates for Youth** screened the film "Too Young to Wed" followed by a 75-minute panel discussion at George Washington University. The panel featured youth activists from China, Nigeria, and Nepal. Additional youth activists from Jamaica and Uganda also contributed to the discussion. Advocates for

Youth posted messages on Twitter during the event to further communicate about child marriage to those not in attendance.



The **University of California San Diego** screened the High Level Panel live from UN Headquarters in New York and hosted a panel of experts to discuss the issue afterwards. The 150 attendees included UCSD students, non-governmental health and development organizations, clinical care programmes and groups, foundations supporting women and girls, and potential donors.

- **Management Sciences for Health** in its [blog](#) reflected on child marriage as a barrier to opportunities for the next generation of women leaders.

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Aschiana** conducted a number of community level activities, including an exhibition of children's paintings portraying the consequences of child marriage, dialogues with community elders to inform them about child marriage, art competitions. At its day care centres, Aschiana also encouraged children to perform plays on the disadvantages of early marriage.
- Wazma Frogh of the **Research Institute for Women, Peace & Security** was [interviewed by Al Jazeera](#) about the support given at women's shelters in Afghanistan to child brides who have fled abusive marriages.

Bangladesh

- **SDS Bangladesh** conducted an 8-day campaign on child marriage, beginning with a press conference attended by 20 journalists. SDS also awarded three journalists for their extraordinary work to highlight child marriage and held a media sensitisation workshop on the issue in which 21 journalists participated.

At the community level, SDS held film shows and folk song concerts to highlight the consequences of child marriage and a girl's group displayed posters and distributed leaflets to a community in the district of Shariatpur. The campaign culminated on 11 October with a rally in which 500 girls and 200 men and boys took part. In total, an estimated 4000 people participated in SDS' campaign, which gained significant media attention.



India

- **EKTA Resource Centre for Women** organised plays about child marriage and how it affects a child's future at 4 schools and in 2 tribal villages in rural Tamil Nadu. All students took a common oath that they will not marry as a child. Those above 12 years old signed a pledge not to marry early and to do all they can to help their friends and sisters avoid early marriage. Teachers at the school were also informed of the health impact of child marriage. In total, EKTA reached 1448 children and 580 adults on Day of the Girl.



Educate Girls launched a campaign to support child brides, which will run from October to the end of January. The campaign involves the publication of posters emphasising the need to support married and unmarried girls through school. Educate Girls is also highlighting the campaign on social media and supporters are being encouraged to participate in the Mumbai marathon to raise money for Educate Girls' work to help child brides.

- **Empower People** led a 15-day campaign against child marriage and female foeticide in Haryana and Rajasthan. The campaign included workshops with law enforcement agencies, public prosecutors and other community stakeholders.
- In the Aurangabad district of India, the **Institute of Health Management Pachod** helped adolescent girls to put on a play for their parents in which they highlighted the advantages of delaying marriage. At the state level in Maharashtra, IHMP held an awareness-raising workshop.
- In Tamil Nadu, the **Meera Foundation** led a dialogue with a group of 164 tribal girls on child marriage. The girls committed to organise a small youth group "Hills Tigers" to work against child marriage and child labour. Games and competitions were also organised for adolescent girls in Tamil Nadu and the activities were featured on FM radio.



With support from the **Jagriti Trust**, Bihar's first Youth Leaders Council met to plan a leadership training programme for 300 youth leaders across 3 districts. The training programme will develop Jagriti Youth Leaders' communication, leadership and negotiation skills and will provide information to enable them to continue their campaign to stop child marriage in Bihar. In Rajasthan, a meeting marked the launch of the Jagriti Youth Leaders Council, followed by a rally in which girls and boys 12-17 walked through the centre of the town. A total of 150 young people participated in these activities.

- **SES India** planned a bicycle ride around Delhi to raise awareness of harmful impact of child marriage. 1,000 – 2,000 participants were expected. SES also worked with Child Line on a competition for girls that focused on child marriage and domestic violence.



- **URMUL Trust** and partner organisations coordinated events in 9 different locations across Rajasthan, the desert state worst affected by child marriage in India. Events took place at four levels – in the state capital, at district and block level, and in many villages. Over 1,000 adolescent girls participated in activities and national, state and local media lent their support to the campaign.

In the state capital Jaipur, for example, 101 girls from villages across Rajasthan came together to voice their concerns to high-level officials. They discussed at length the obstacles they face in everyday life. To support these activities, a *Girls Not Brides* advocacy letter was co-signed by a number of organisations and forwarded to State representatives, including the Governor of Rajasthan and the Chief Minister of the state, advocating an end to child marriage and ensuring a supportive environment for girls.



- In collaboration with other civil society organisations, **Vikalp** celebrated International Day of Girl with events at 21 schools across 7 districts, in which 3,500 girls participated. Vikalp delivered a petition to chief Minister of Rajasthan calling for the proper implementation of the Prevention of Child Marriage Act and other girl child related schemes, laws and acts. Vikalp also visited a number of district collectors and district police officers in Rajasthan to interact with them on child marriage. Vikalp’s efforts received positive media coverage.

Nepal



BHORE celebrated the 3rd Anniversary of its ‘Campaign for Child Marriage and Dowry System Eradication’. Six hundred people took part in the celebrations, including government officials, politicians, media, civil society, religious leaders and others. A new poster for the campaign was released and a candlelight vigil was held. BHORE briefed Prime Minister Dr. Babu Ram Bhattari about the campaign, and he awarded scholarships to six girls of the Musahar community.

- **SOLID Nepal** published an article on the benefits that sex education could bring in helping to end child marriage. SOLID Nepal also spoke about ending child marriage on Image FM 97.7, broadcast across the country, and on Music Of Your Choice, Play it On and Kantipur TV, three youth-oriented television talk shows. Other media work included a vox pop published in Republica Daily. SOLID Nepal also conducted Behaviour Change Communication activities in more than 50 schools in the Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Lalitpur, Sindhupalchowk and Dolakha districts.



Pakistan

Together, **Blue Veins** and **ActionAid** Pakistan designed a poster to highlight child marriage on Day of the Girl. 2,000 posters were printed and sent to members of the End Violence Against Women and Girls Network, provincial and federal chapters, libraries, CBOs, women’s networks, UN Agencies, government offices and organisations working around the world. The two organisations also co-produced a factsheet on child marriage in Pakistan for media.

Awaz Foundation Pakistan initiated a month long campaign to discourage early marriage and improve girls' education, including a signature campaign to condemn early marriages.

Blue Veins, ActionAid and others organised a doll protest outside the Islamabad Press Club where children's toys were displayed to mimic an adult protest. Each toy was arranged to hold a miniature placard against child marriage. The protest projected the innocence of children and emphasised that girls are neither physically nor psychologically ready for marriage. This innovative protest was covered by over 50 Pakistani media outlets.

- **Sujag Sansar** celebrated International Day of Girl with activities in its three girls' schools in Sindh province. Activities included a speech competition among the girl students, who highlighted the importance of girls' education and condemned the practice of child marriage. The Sujag Theater Group presented a play about child marriage in Pakistan. The schools also arranged an exhibition of handicrafts made by students, including dolls dressed as girl brides to highlight the issue of child marriage.



Sri Lanka

- In the south of Sri Lanka, **Women in Need** organised an awareness programme about Day of the Girl on 8 October, with a special focus on *Girls Not Brides* and child marriage.

[ENDS]