



# GIRLS NOT BRIDES

The Global Partnership  
to End Child Marriage



## IT TAKES A MOVEMENT:

### REFLECTING ON FIVE YEARS OF PROGRESS TOWARDS ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This progress report has been prepared by the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat. It reflects our understanding of progress over the past five years based on insights from discussions with members and partners over that period as well as insights gained through our strategy consultation process for 2017-2020.

We would like to pay special thanks to those who have provided input for the case studies included. The quotes used have been drawn from various conversations, meetings and reports.

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# FOREWORDS

**When *Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage* was launched in September 2011, I had no idea how much we would achieve within five years, nor, conversely, how much would still need to be done.**

When the Elders first decided to address gender inequality and tackle how religion and tradition are too often misused to justify discrimination against girls and women, they knew it would be an uphill battle. Yet, they recognised that by galvanising efforts to end child marriage – with its entrenched links to education, poverty, health and patriarchy – they could have a significant impact. With 15 million girls marrying every year, the issue was too big and its consequences too severe to be ignored any longer.

The strategic approach of The Elders was two-fold. By shining a light on the harmful practice, they wanted to ensure that child marriage would finally get the attention it deserved. At the same time, they realised that global awareness would never by itself lead to change on the ground, in girls' lives. That's why, in response to the requests of activists and groups working directly with girls around the world, The Elders facilitated the creation of a global partnership – to bring together all civil society organisations keen to work on ending child marriage under the one umbrella of *Girls Not Brides*.

It is exciting that in only five years, *Girls Not Brides* has grown to more than 600 members in over 80 countries. And we have much to celebrate in terms of what we have achieved together at the global, regional and national levels.

This report outlines those key achievements. It also highlights what still needs to happen to realise our vision: more governments need to develop strategies and then put actions behind their words; effective solutions need to be scaled; more financial support needs to be given, especially to those working at community level; and more research is needed on the causes and impact of child marriage.

Most importantly, we must continue to put girls at the heart of everything we do. Their dreams of being able to stay in school and choosing when and who they marry should become a reality. Because in a world without child marriage, we will all be better educated, healthier, more prosperous and more equal. Let girls be girls, not brides.

## **Mabel van Oranje**

Board Chair – *Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage*

**Many people talk about working in partnership as idealistic but impractical. However, what we've seen at *Girls Not Brides* over the past five years is that, especially when dealing with a complex problem like child marriage, it is the only way to make sustained progress.**

This is what I find most exciting when reflecting on this report – that so many individuals and organisations from around the world have recognised early on the importance of coming together to work in partnership, pooling their creativity, resources and efforts.

The fruits of this collaboration have been amazing. Back in 2011, child marriage was still very much a taboo subject. But by the time of the first International Day of the Girl in October 2012, we were already seeing events focusing on ending child marriage by *Girls Not Brides* members around the world, with their messages being echoed in the halls of the United Nations by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Ban Ki-moon, as well as new funding commitments by donors. Today, through the power of our collective voice the world is much more aware of why child marriage is so important, and has made a commitment to end the practice in the Sustainable Development Goals. The 15 million girls who are married each year are no longer invisible and their voices are getting stronger by the day.

These are significant achievements and we should rightly be proud. But this report reminds us that there is still much more to do. As we move into the next phase of our collective work, we need to focus on creating a groundswell of action, in countries, communities and families around the world. This is the only way we will be able to achieve the type of long-term and tangible changes that will allow girls everywhere in the world to live their lives free from child marriage.

It won't be easy. But that's where the power of partnership comes in. By working together, we can continue to achieve so much more than when we compete. Together, we can end child marriage in one generation.

**Lakshmi Sundaram**

Executive Director – *Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

***Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage was born in 2011 out of a recognition that child marriage is a widespread and devastating problem for girls everywhere, but that it can be tackled if interested people from around the world join hands.***

Since then, civil society organisations have worked together through the Partnership to increase public awareness about child marriage, strengthen political commitment to ending the practice, and facilitate learning and coordination about what needed to be done.

Working together with UN agencies, donors, governments, networks of parliamentarians and others, the members and partners of *Girls Not Brides* have stimulated unprecedented action to end child marriage in the five years since the Partnership's launch. This report reflects on what progress has been made in those five years, how working in partnership has helped catalyse this change, and what remains to be done.

## **There have been exciting advances in a number of areas, including:**

### ■ **New global and regional commitments:**

Child marriage was included as a global development priority in target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Resolutions at the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council have mobilised political support and strengthened the global normative framework. Other regional and intergovernmental bodies, including the African Union and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, have set out plans of action to end child marriage.

### ■ **Strengthened legal and policy frameworks:**

National strategies have been developed or are being developed in at least 14 countries. Many countries have also taken steps to strengthen their laws to address child marriage.

### ■ **New programmes:**

The number of programmes addressing child marriage has grown dramatically, with increased action from international NGOs, community based organisations and many others. UNICEF and UNFPA have launched a new Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage in 12 countries.

### ■ **A movement to end child marriage:**

Once a taboo topic with little political or public recognition, child marriage is now an issue of international concern; it is the subject of discussions of governments, international organisations, parliamentarians, youth groups, religious and traditional leaders, communities and donors. *Girls Not Brides* has grown to over 600 members in more than 80 countries.

### ■ **Growing consensus of what needs to be done:**

There is an increased global understanding of the range of approaches needed to tackle child marriage and the role of different sectors.

### ■ **More funding:**

Donor governments and private foundations have invested millions of dollars into efforts to end child marriage. However, the funding available is nowhere near enough to tackle the scale of the problem.

## Many challenges remain and much more needs to be done.

The global movement must now shift from raising awareness and making global commitments to ensuring that commitments are implemented to achieve tangible change in the lives of girls. Work needs to be scaled up, coordination improved, and more support given for community based efforts. National strategies need to be properly costed, funded and implemented. We also need a better understanding of what really works. And the voices of girls affected by child marriage need to be at the centre of the global movement.

For collective efforts towards ending child marriage to be taken to the next level in the coming years, a number of critical actions are needed:

- 1 Hold governments accountable to their international, regional and national commitments**, in particular to developing ambitious plans for implementing target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals with clear indicators for progress.
- 2 Develop, implement and fund comprehensive policies, programmes and plans** to end child marriage and support married girls, in partnership with civil society and other key stakeholders. This might involve the development of targeted national strategies and/or integration of child marriage into related strategies for girls and children.
- 3 Continue to grow and strengthen the movement** by involving new stakeholders, developing new partnerships, and supporting new champions. Ensure that young people are at the forefront of the movement.
- 4 Celebrate and share successes**, including case studies of individuals overcoming child marriage, of communities who have united to promote a better future for their girls, of policy change or programmatic initiatives which have had a large-scale impact and ultimately of regions and countries where child marriage has been tackled in a holistic and comprehensive manner.
- 5 Engage related sectors** – such as those addressing education, health or violence – at global, regional, national and local levels, so that they integrate a focus on ending child marriage into their work.
- 6 Learn from what works and what doesn't** so that efforts to end child marriage are based on the latest evidence. Ensure the necessary research, documentation and evaluation of programmes and policies, and learn from other sectors and initiatives which address social norm change.
- 7 Increase funding for efforts which prevent child marriage and support married girls**, and ensure the necessary support for grassroots groups working directly with those affected. In particular, target investment in education and health programmes for girls, as well as in initiatives which tackle social norm change over the long term.

# INTRODUCTION

**Child marriage<sup>1</sup> has been practised for centuries around the world, cutting across cultures, religions and ethnicities, undermining the potential of girls everywhere. Yet, five years ago, public awareness of child marriage and political attention devoted to the practice around the world was disproportionately low, especially in light of the sheer numbers of girls affected, and the devastating consequences that it had throughout their lives.**

Civil society activists and organisations had been pioneering innovative solutions to tackle child marriage for decades. However their efforts were isolated, uncoordinated and lacked visibility and attention. Furthermore, with no public and political recognition of the importance of the problem, change was taking place at a small scale and very slowly.

Appalled at the extent of the problem, The Elders – a group of independent global leaders brought together by Nelson Mandela to promote human rights and social justice – decided to make child marriage the flagship issue of their efforts to advance gender equality. Through extensive consultations with dozens of experts and activists working to end child marriage, they learned that ending the practice would dramatically advance not only girls’ rights, but also the development of nations. Five years ago, The Elders brought together a group of 80 experts from local and international NGOs, research institutions and international organisations who were working on child marriage around the world to learn about their work. Inspired by the courage and determination of

these change-makers, The Elders asked them how they could support their efforts. The answer was two-fold: make the case that this is a vital issue, and help us work better together.

In September 2011, *Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage* was formally launched by The Elders with the Ford Foundation, the Nike Foundation and the NoVo Foundation in New York, where they reminded world leaders that they were in a position to make decisions that could have a real impact on the lives of millions of girls. The Partnership was designed by experts and activists themselves as a space to learn from one another, to raise awareness of child marriage by encouraging open, inclusive and informed discussions, and to develop joint strategies to mobilise all necessary policy, financial, and technical support to end child marriage.

Five years on from these beginnings, the global landscape around child marriage has changed significantly, and there is a need to take stock of where we are today. *Girls Not Brides* is currently developing its new strategy for

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**“The world is now blessed with the biggest generation of girls in history. By ending child marriage we can empower millions of girls to fulfil their potential and help to transform communities on an unprecedented scale.”** Archbishop Desmond Tutu,

Co-founder and Champion of *Girls Not Brides* and former Chair of The Elders

<sup>1</sup> Child marriage is any formal marriage or informal union where one or both of the parties is under the age of 18.



**“A sea change has occurred in the past decade, with gender on the global development agenda in more ways than ever before. From my perspective, *Girls Not Brides*’ focus on child marriage arrived at just the right time, providing a concrete, measurable, and accessible way to channel increased momentum around gender issues.”**

Anju Malhotra, UNICEF and *Girls Not Brides* Advisory Committee Member

the Partnership for 2017-2020 and, as part of the strategy development process, has been consulting civil society members and other experts, asking them to reflect on achievements so far and the gaps that remain.

The analysis in this report is based on key findings from that consultation, along with observations from the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat; it is by no means definitive, but a reflection on progress made. While individuals and organisations on their own have made outstanding progress and critical contributions to ending child marriage, this report focuses on key achievements made together as a movement. The recommendations

included in this report offer critical areas for further attention in the coming years.

The first section of this report looks at where we are now in terms of the scale of the problem and the outlook for change. The second section reviews the progress made over the last five years – and the gaps that need to be addressed – in terms of building global commitment; strengthening legal and policy frameworks; creating a movement; developing an understanding of what needs to be done at the global, regional, national and local levels, and the funding to match such commitments. Section three discusses what needs to be done going forward.

## About us

*Girls Not Brides* was founded in 2011 by The Elders, a group of independent global leaders formed by Nelson Mandela to work together for peace and human rights. In 2013 *Girls Not Brides* became an independent organisation, with its own Board of Trustees and secretariat. The Elders remain a member of the Partnership.

*Girls Not Brides* is now a Partnership of over 600 civil society organisations from more than 80 countries. The members are diverse, approaching the issue from a range of perspectives, including human rights, health, education and child protection. As part of the Partnership, they have an opportunity to learn from others, develop joint activities and strategies, and join a community of practitioners.

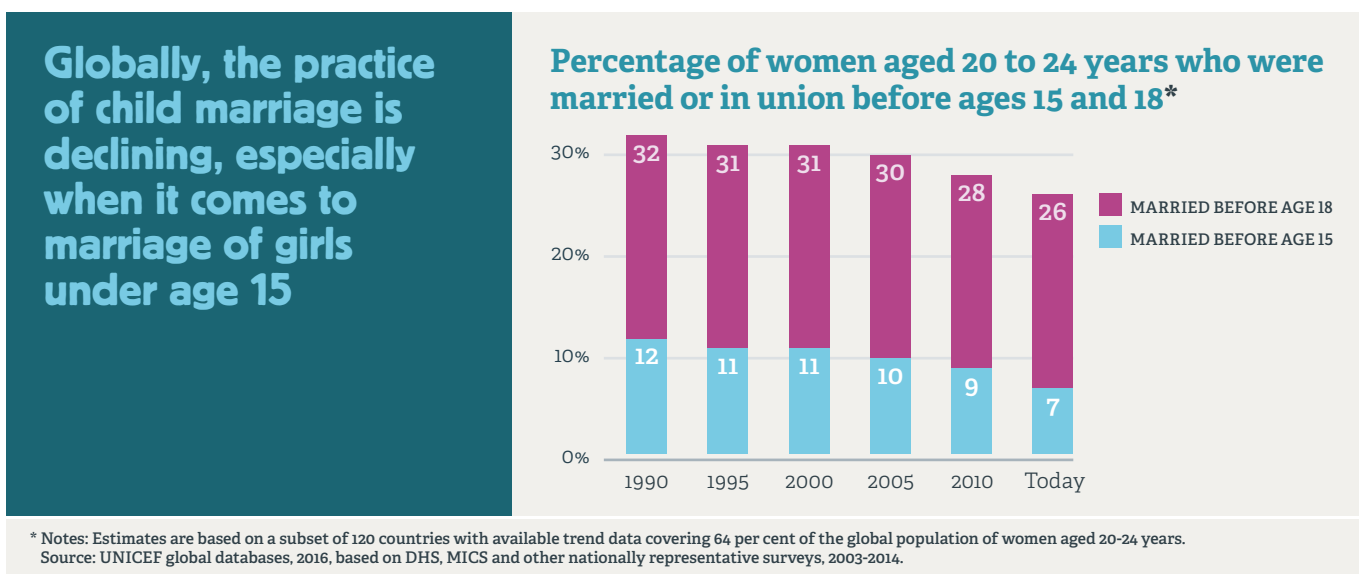


Working together, members bring child marriage to global attention, build an understanding of what it will take to end this harmful practice and call for the laws, policies and programmes that will make a difference in the lives of millions of girls.



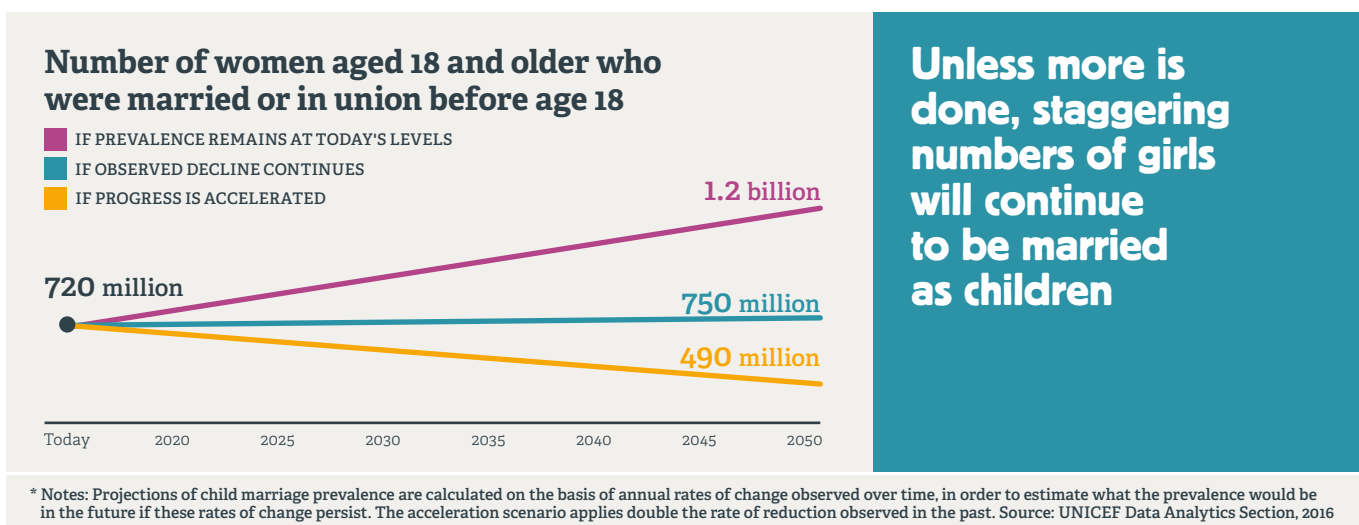
# 1 CHILD MARRIAGE – RATES DOWN, NUMBERS UP

In the past five years as the scale and urgency of tackling child marriage has increasingly been recognised, we now understand the trends better than ever before. Is the world making progress? Are rates and numbers increasing or decreasing? Recent analysis tells a story of modest progress in terms of child marriage rates.



However, this progress is incredibly fragile and business as usual is not an option; while rates are falling, growing populations mean the absolute number of child

marriages will continue to increase if efforts are not dramatically accelerated. Gains can easily be reversed in the face of backlashes or complacency.



The global trends suggest that change is possible, but it takes time. While it is clear that we can take massive steps quickly to address child marriage, these efforts will need to be sustained and the impact in terms of

drastically falling child marriage rates may only be seen after a generation. Progress will be seen most dramatically when the youth of today decide that they want a different future for their children.

# CHILD MARRIAGE AROUND THE WORLD: KEY FACTS<sup>2</sup>

## 15 MILLION

girls a year marry before  
the age of 18

## 1.2 BILLION

women will have married as children by 2050  
if there is no reduction in child marriage

## 720 MILLION

women alive today were married  
before the age of 18

## 1 IN 4 GIRLS

globally are married  
before the age of 18

## 250 MILLION

women alive today were married  
before the age of 15

## 156 MILLION

men alive today were married  
before the age of 18

**Child marriage occurs around the world,  
and cuts across countries, cultures,  
religions and ethnicities:**

**Percentage of 20-24 year old girls married before 18:**



**45%**  
in South Asia



**39%**  
in sub-Saharan Africa



**23%**  
in Latin America and  
the Caribbean



**18%**  
in the Middle East  
and North Africa.

**Child marriage also persists in some  
communities in Europe and North America.**

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects, 2014 / UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 2016

# CAUSES AND IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE

## THE CAUSES OF CHILD MARRIAGE ARE COMPLEX:



Rooted in gender inequality



Tradition



Poverty



Insecurity



Lack of alternative options for girls

## THE IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE INCLUDES:



Violations of human rights



Increased risk in pregnancy and childbirth



HIV infection



Domestic violence



Reduced access to education



Continued cycles of poverty

**Communities and countries feel the impact as child marriage stifles girls' potential to thrive.**

## 2 PROGRESS AND GAPS

**Much progress has been made at the international, regional and national levels in building momentum and commitment to tackle child marriage and in developing strategies and initiatives for action. In response to this momentum, there has been a proliferation of new programmes and efforts to end child marriage from a wide variety of new and established actors.**



**The following five sub-sections highlight areas where we have seen particular progress or interest over the past five years.**

### 2.1 Building global commitment

Discussions in the halls of the UN and other global and regional institutions can seem completely removed from the day-to-day realities of the girls affected by child marriage. However, international and regional commitments are crucial for a number of reasons: they help to build political will, momentum and leadership among high prevalence countries; they help to strengthen global norms around child marriage and the policies and programmes that will bring the practice to an end; they set global and regional priorities

for development, which in turn direct investments and funding; and they are useful accountability tools for advocates in countries around the world.

Five years ago, child marriage was hardly on the global agenda. It was sometimes recognised as one of many issues facing girls but was not given political attention. There was reluctance in international fora to tackling issues which were seen as falling squarely within the remit of 'culture' and 'tradition'. Yet some were determined to challenge this and ensure that the international community sees child marriage for what it is – a human rights abuse and an undeniable barrier to girls' and women's empowerment.

**“Culture is the best of the values that we as human beings cherish. What we need to challenge are the traditions and practices that have developed over time that are harmful to girls and women and which do not represent our values. Traditions were made by people; they can be changed by people.”**

Graça Machel, Co-founder and Champion of *Girls Not Brides*, and a member of The Elders



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### Where are we today?

Over the past five years, sustained advocacy by civil society; governments (both those with high child marriage rates like Ghana and Zambia and those investing in development aid like Canada, the Netherlands and the UK); international organisations (in particular UNICEF and UNFPA) and girls themselves have put child marriage squarely on the

international agenda. Early progress included the first-ever International Day of the Girl Child focusing on child marriage and advocacy at the United Nations (including the Commission on the Status of Women, the Human Rights Council, and progress reviews of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the Beijing Declaration).



© UN Photo: Paulo Figueras

**“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.”**

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General

This advocacy resulted in over 100 governments co-sponsoring resolutions on child marriage at the Human Rights Council in 2013 and 2015, and at the UN General Assembly in 2014. Commonwealth Heads of Government have consistently committed to addressing child marriage in their meetings since 2011 and, in May 2015, 15 Commonwealth National Human Rights Institutions signed the Kigali Declaration, committing to tackle child marriage.



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Many governments, funders and organisations also made first-time policy, research and programming commitments to end child marriage and female genital mutilation at the Girl Summit hosted by the UK government and UNICEF in London in 2014. The Girl Summit prompted other girl summits at the national and regional levels, including the 2015 Africa Girl Summit, hosted by the government of Zambia.

But perhaps the most outstanding international achievement of the past five years, and the culmination of global commitment-making, was the inclusion of target 5.3 – to end child marriage by 2030 – in the Sustainable Development Goals, the world's development roadmap and guide for sustained investment for the next 15 years. The strength of the Sustainable Development Goals lies in their universality, depth, political commitment, and inter-connectedness. This target is not only important for ending child marriage but also crucial to make progress on other key development issues: poverty, education, health, nutrition, economic growth and reduction of inequalities, particularly gender inequality.

## THE GIRL SUMMIT CHARTER ON ENDING FGM AND CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE



No one should be forced into marriage, or made to marry while still a child.

No girl or woman should have to endure the physical and psychological effects of female genital mutilation.

These practices violate the fundamental rights of all girls and women to live free from violence and discrimination.

Such violations not only harm individual girls; by undermining girls' ability to make their own choices and reach their full potential, they also diminish the strength of families, communities and society.

So today, we commit to work together to end child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, for girls and women, everywhere, forever.

### WE AGREE THAT:

1. Child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation must end, and the elimination of these practices should be reflected in the post 2015 development framework.
2. Every girl and woman at risk of or affected by these practices must have access to appropriate services like education, counselling, shelter, reproductive health and medical care.
3. Governments must design and implement effective, properly funded policies and clear legislation to end these practices forever, and to protect anyone at risk. Where necessary they should work together across borders to implement these policies and legislation.
4. Legislation alone is not enough. We will all raise awareness and understanding so everyone respects the equal value and potential of girls. We will support local groups around the world - led by women and men, girls and boys – to do the same. Lasting change will come from communities themselves.
5. We will gather more and better data, improve the way we measure social change, and make open source data publicly available to help make the right decisions about how to end these practices.
6. We must drive systemic, sustainable change in the way girls and women are valued in our societies, so they can seize the same opportunities and realise the same rights as boys and men.
7. We need to invest in all girls so they have the knowledge, education, skills, and self-confidence to take control of their lives. We will work together across different systems, including education, health and reproductive health, justice, social protection, child protection, and civil registration.
8. Young people are a powerful force for change. We need to listen to, and consult with, young people - especially those affected - and support youth-led initiatives to break the cycle of these practices.
9. All of us need to take action to end these practices, including governments, faith groups, traditional leaders, non-governmental organisations and civil society groups, young people, practitioners, people affected by these practices, communities, international organisations, media and the private sector.
10. The individual commitments that accompany this Charter will be monitored and assessed on an annual basis, and the results published on-line.

TARGET  
5.3

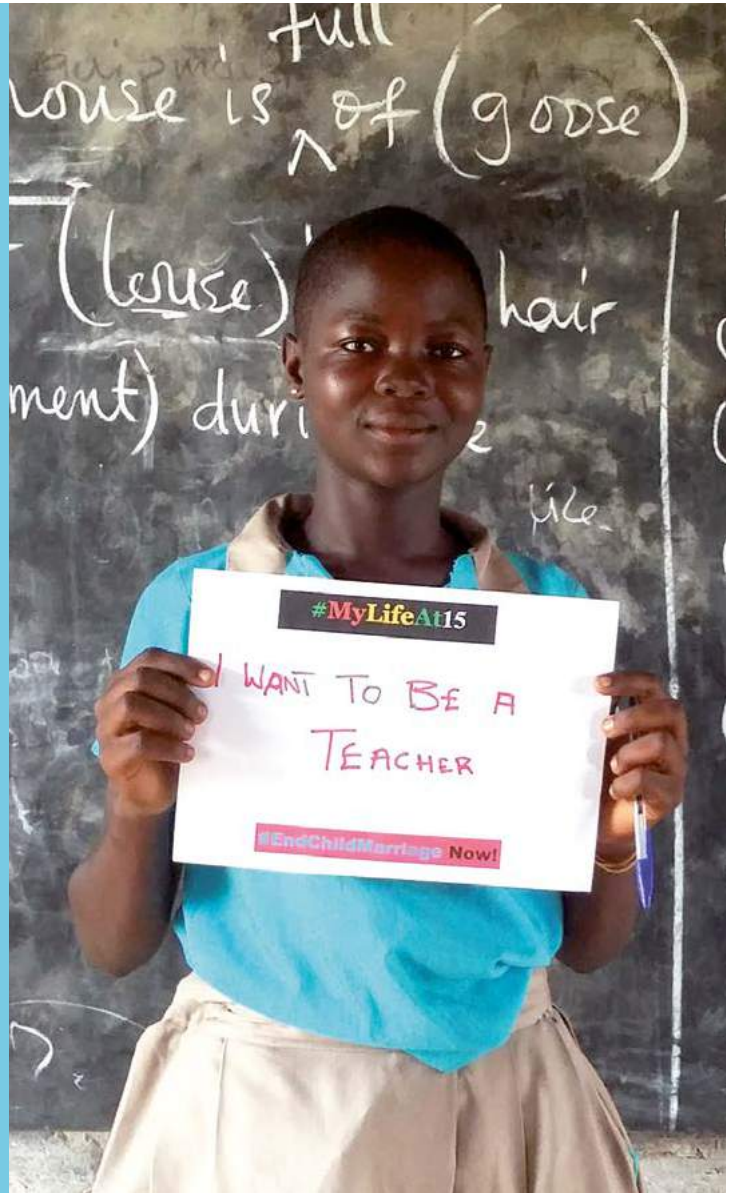
Target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls on governments to: *Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.* The indicator for target 5.3 will be the percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18. Countries will have to regularly report on progress toward achieving the targets.



## Civil society voices come together to ensure adolescent girls are not forgotten again

Collective advocacy by civil society played a huge role in putting child marriage onto the global development agenda. A key message of civil society organisations working with girls was that adolescent girls had been left behind in the Millennium Development Goals and this must be rectified in the new development agenda. The continued high rate of child marriage was a reflection of adolescent girls' rights not being addressed by governments.

In addition to individual advocacy by a wide range of actors, civil society worked collectively in support of target 5.3 through joint letters and initiatives. In July 2014, **148 Girls Not Brides members co-signed a letter to the key influencers** in the process of developing the new agenda, urging them to include a distinct target on child, early and forced marriage<sup>3</sup>, and **176 members co-signed a letter to the UN Secretary-General** stressing the need for a strong target. By September 2015, the UN adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, which included target 5.3.



Significant progress has also been made at the regional level. The adoption of the African Common Position on Ending Child Marriage in June 2015 by African Heads of States has built consensus around what next steps are needed in Africa: comprehensive strategies and action plans to end child marriage as well as laws setting the minimum age of marriage at 18 which are resourced and enforced. South Asia's

equivalent was the adoption of a Regional Action Plan to End Child Marriage in August 2014 which called for comprehensive government action in South Asian countries. However, in other regions there has been much less action at a regional level. The Middle East, the Pacific and Latin America have not seen similar initiatives, despite the high prevalence of child marriage in these regions.

<sup>3</sup> The accepted UN terminology for this practice is "child, early and forced marriage" based on multiple UN resolutions and definitions suggested by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights report of 2014. *Girls Not Brides* uses "child marriage" as shorthand.

As well as the growing number of global and regional commitments, guidance for implementing these agreements has increased from human rights bodies, experts, and committees which oversee adherence to international human rights obligations. For example, in 2014 the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued joint recommendations clarifying the human rights obligations of governments to prevent child marriage and support married girls. The African

Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child urged African Union Member States to set 18 as the minimum age of marriage and to develop and implement holistic strategies. Others have helped to provide guidance in areas where there was previously no consensus: for example, the Southern African Development Community adopted guidance on what makes a strong legal framework through its model law on child marriage, and *Girls Not Brides* developed a check-list to guide the development of national strategies to end child marriage.

## Key moments for global advocacy on child marriage: 2011 - 2015

### 2011

OCTOBER

#### Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

54 Heads of Government commit to taking action.



### 2012

OCTOBER

#### 1st International Day of the Girl Child

Focuses on child marriage and 50 *Girls Not Brides* members from 29 countries call for action.



### 2013

SEPTEMBER

#### 1st ever HRC resolution on child marriage

Co-sponsored by 100+ countries, puts child marriage on the HRC agenda.

DECEMBER

#### 1st ever UNGA resolution on child marriage

Puts child marriage on the UN General Assembly agenda highlighting it as a barrier to development.



© UN Photo: Eskinder Debebe

#### KEY

AU	African Union
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation / Cutting
HRC	Human Rights Council
OHCHR	Office of High Commission for Human Rights
UNGA	UN General Assembly
SAIEVAC	South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children (Apex Body of The South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC))
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

## Looking forward

The commitments in international fora have so far acknowledged the importance of holistic responses and cross-sectoral policies and programmes to tackle child marriage. They have recognised the drivers and impacts of child marriage, and have begun to outline the actions that governments must take to end the practice.

Future resolutions at the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly will need to reflect the evolving understanding of child marriage – particularly the root

causes, context-specific drivers and life-long consequences – and outline more specific steps that governments must take to end it, across all sectors, including those involved in development and humanitarian aid.

The international community will continue to play an important role in monitoring the implementation of commitments, particularly in ensuring implementation and financing of the Sustainable Development Goals target and fulfilling human rights obligations.

## 2014

### APRIL

#### 1st OHCHR report on child, early and forced marriage

Sets out international human rights standards related to child, early and forced marriage. 70+ civil society organisations contribute to consultation.

### JULY

#### London Girl Summit

1st global summit to mobilise efforts to end child marriage and FGM/C within a generation.



© DFID / Russell Watkins

### AUGUST

#### SAIEVAC Regional Action Plan to End Child Marriage

Sets out action needed by governments of South Asia.

### NOVEMBER

#### 2nd UNGA resolution on child marriage

Co-sponsored by 116 countries and adopted by consensus, sets out three key recommendations for governments to end child marriage.

## 2015

### MAY

#### Commonwealth Kigali Declaration

Adopted by 15 National Human Rights Institutions.

### JUNE

#### Common African Position on Ending Child Marriage in Africa

Adopted by all AU Member States, calls for comprehensive action and minimum age of marriage at 18.

### JULY

#### 2nd HRC resolution on child marriage

Co-sponsored by 85+ countries and adopted by consensus, recognises child marriage as a violation of human rights and a barrier to sustainable development.

### SEPTEMBER

#### SDGs address child marriage

The culmination of five years' effort - the SDGs include target 5.3 that commits all governments to take concrete action to end child marriage by 2030.



## 2.2 Strengthening legal and policy frameworks

Given the complex causes and far-reaching consequences of child marriage, as well as the long-term nature of solutions, governments have an important leadership role to play. This is why many advocates have been calling for stronger legal and policy frameworks within high prevalence countries.

Five years ago, the measure of how governments were tackling child marriage was whether there was a law in place which established a minimum age of marriage. While most countries had laws which set a minimum age, usually at age 18, many had exceptions to that minimum age, such as parental consent or authorisation of the court, or customary or religious laws that set lower minimum ages of marriage and took precedence over the national law. Implementation of these laws was often weak or ignored.

At a political level, addressing child marriage was not considered a priority by any government. No governments had specific national strategies or plans to end child marriage, or had paid systematic, cross-governmental attention to the issue.

### Where are we today?

#### Legal frameworks

Globally, progress to develop strong comprehensive legal frameworks which protect against child marriage and support girls' rights has been slow. However, a number of countries have taken steps to bring national laws into accordance with international standards by increasing the minimum age of marriage to 18. For instance, since 2011, Azerbaijan, Chad, Ecuador, Kenya, Malawi, Turkmenistan as well as the Sindh province of Pakistan all increased the age of marriage to 18. A number of other countries, such as Georgia, Guatemala, Liberia and Mexico, removed parental consent exceptions which allowed marriage under 18. However, in some cases exceptions with judicial consent remain in place. In other countries, such as Kyrgyzstan, punishments for child marriage have been strengthened. There have also been legal reforms in certain US States, and in the Netherlands, demonstrating the need for universal action to implement a minimum age.

However, it is increasingly recognised that legal and policy reform must address more than the minimum age of marriage: it should include, for example, the harmonisation of civil and customary laws; the removal of exceptions to legal age of marriage (e.g. judicial or parental consent); the strengthening of birth and marriage registration, and a wide range of other legal and policy changes. Importantly, the number of court cases which aim to challenge legal discrepancies and loopholes which do not align to international human rights standards has increased.



## Child brides' legal challenge in Zimbabwe

In January 2016, Zimbabwe's Constitutional Court ruled in favour of two child brides and made marriage under the age of 18 illegal. At only 16, Loveness and Ruvimbo had been forced into marriage. A few years later, they decided to seek justice – not only for themselves, but for the thousands of girls in Zimbabwe who are married off every year.

With the support of ROOTS, a *Girls Not Brides* member, and Veritas, a legal think tank, Loveness and Ruvimbo led a campaign to declare existing legislation unconstitutional and recognise 18 as the minimum age of marriage, in line with international standards.

Zimbabwe had already made child marriage illegal in 2013 when it adopted a new constitution setting the minimum age of marriage to 18 and calling on the state to ensure that “no children are pledged into marriage”. Yet the Marriage Act clashed with the constitution's new provisions by allowing girls as young as 16 to marry with the consent of their parents. The court's decision was a first step towards addressing a legal discrepancy that has left many girls vulnerable to child marriage and without the full protection of the law.



### Policy frameworks

The past five years have seen an encouraging move towards the development of comprehensive national strategies which involve different ministries across government – recognition that one ministry working alone cannot be successful. International and regional momentum has helped to catalyse this. As of August 2016, at least eight countries had launched national strategies to address child marriage (Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nepal,

Uganda and Zambia) and others are in the process of creating such strategies (Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe). When developed thoughtfully and with the input and buy-in of a range of stakeholders, and when they have clear accompanying action plans, national strategies have the potential to galvanise coordinated action at a large scale. Furthermore, by including monitoring frameworks, they provide an important mechanism for accountability.

### Learning from national strategies

Experience with national strategies over the past five years offers several lessons:

-  Success ultimately hinges on the **leadership, political will and commitment of the government.** However, capacity strengthening (both technical and financial) of government institutions, in particular at district level, is crucial.
-  **Civil society and youth have an important role** in catalysing and supporting the development and implementation of national strategies, sustaining interest and ensuring that no girls are left behind.
-  An inclusive **participatory process** for both the development and implementation of national strategies is necessary. It should include different perspectives and capture the complexity of interventions needed to produce multi-faceted solutions to end child marriage. It also contributes to longer-term sustainability.
-  **Multi-sectoral engagement** is required, and strategies for engaging different sectors should be tailored to their interests, expertise and priorities.
-  **Collaboration, coordination** and open communication can help align efforts across sectors and stakeholders. Collaboration takes time, energy and patience, but is ultimately necessary to avoid duplication, competition, fragmentation of efforts and confusion.
-  **Research and evidence** about the prevalence and context of child marriage, regional disparities of the practice, and what works and does not work to address it, should inform national strategies. National strategies should promote evidence based interventions, facilitate learning, and strengthen data collection.
-  **Costing of and budgeting for national strategies is critical for implementation.** This requires investing time and resources in multi-year interventions and investing technical resources and building capacity, especially at the sub-national level.
-  **Dedicated national strategies on child marriage are not always the only answer:** the broader policy context for addressing child marriage should be considered to assess whether integration into related policies may make more sense.

**“In 2013, we realised that there were a lot of interventions to tackle child marriage in Zambia. The problem is that they were isolated. We had to act as one... The national strategy is an opportunity to harmonise these policies to the benefit of the child.”** Peter Mucheleka, then Ministry of Chiefs

and Traditional Affairs, Zambia

## Participatory strategy development: the case of Nepal

In 2014, the government of Nepal spent a year developing a strategy to end child marriage which would respond to the needs of communities most affected by the practice.

To ensure a transparent, inclusive and participatory strategy development process, an inter-ministerial Steering Committee on Ending Child Marriage made up of more than 10 ministries supported by UNICEF was established to oversee the strategy's development.

*Girls Not Brides Nepal*, a National Partnership of civil society organisations working to end child marriage in Nepal, played a key role in the process,

particularly to research and understand the issue in communities and consult with them about what needed to be done. More than 60 consultations took place at community, district and national levels with government ministries, adolescents, youth, local and international NGOs, academia, law enforcement officials, the media, UN agencies, religious networks and community based organisations.

This extensive participatory process served to build a national movement in Nepal to end child marriage, and the development of a national strategy which responds to the needs identified by communities themselves.

## Looking forward

Some countries have taken steps to strengthen legal frameworks to address child marriage. However, inconsistencies and loopholes in laws – along with a lack of capacity, resources or will to implement them – remain challenges.

The growing willingness of many high prevalence governments to treat child marriage as a priority, and to take concrete steps to address it in a comprehensive manner, is a huge step forward. However, in many cases this interest and willingness has not been adequately translated into clear and well communicated action plans, owned by all relevant ministries, and with budget allocation. Ensuring that the lead ministries for addressing child marriage have adequate resources – often the ministries of women, gender, children, traditional affairs, social welfare, or similar, which tend to be among those with less funding and influence – remains particularly

challenging. In addition, engaging related sectors – such as those responsible for education, health, law and justice, child protection, social protection, employment and livelihoods, agriculture, data, monitoring and statistics, finance, etc. – so that they integrate a focus on ending child marriage into their work is critical to take a more holistic approach.

For child marriage to be addressed effectively, those working on the issue need to adopt an integrated, comprehensive approach. While governments should take the lead, civil society, in particular girls and boys affected, need to be involved at all stages to ensure that plans are grounded in reality. For these plans to result in a real change in the lives of the girls affected, they must be implemented with local partners, have clear indicators of progress and be adequately resourced. Civil society has a key role to play in holding governments accountable.

# PROGRESS SINCE 2011: WHERE CHANGE HAS TAKEN PLACE

**A number of important steps have been taken since 2011 to build commitment to address child marriage:**

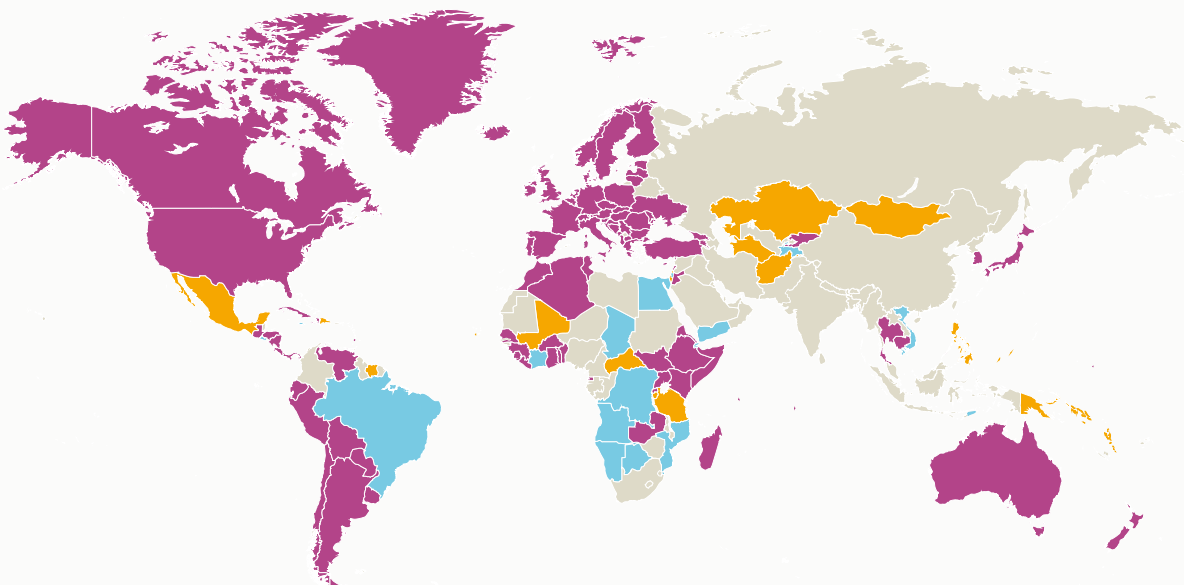
► **UN commitments:** Map 1 shows the 100+ countries which have made commitments to end child marriage at the UN by co-sponsoring either the 2014 UN General Assembly resolution or the 2013 and 2015 Human Rights Council resolutions.

► **Legal and policy reforms:** Map 2 shows the eight countries which have already developed national strategies (many others are also in development but not reflected here). This map also shows countries which have made legal reforms in the past five years. By legal reforms we mean countries which have increased the minimum age of marriage to 18; removed exceptions to the minimum age which allow marriage with parental or judicial consent;

increased the age of marriage with judicial consent; strengthened punishments; or no longer recognise marriages which involve individuals under the age of 18.

► **Civil society coordination:** Map 3 shows the 80+ countries from which over 600 organisations have joined *Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage*. In at least 15 countries coalitions or alliances have formed or begun to emerge to develop common strategies to address child marriage. In seven of those countries the coalitions / alliances have decided to align with *Girls Not Brides* and become official *Girls Not Brides* National Partnerships.

## 1. COUNTRIES WHICH CO-SPONSORED THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS IN 2013 AND 2015 & COUNTRIES WHICH CO-SPONSORED THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 2014



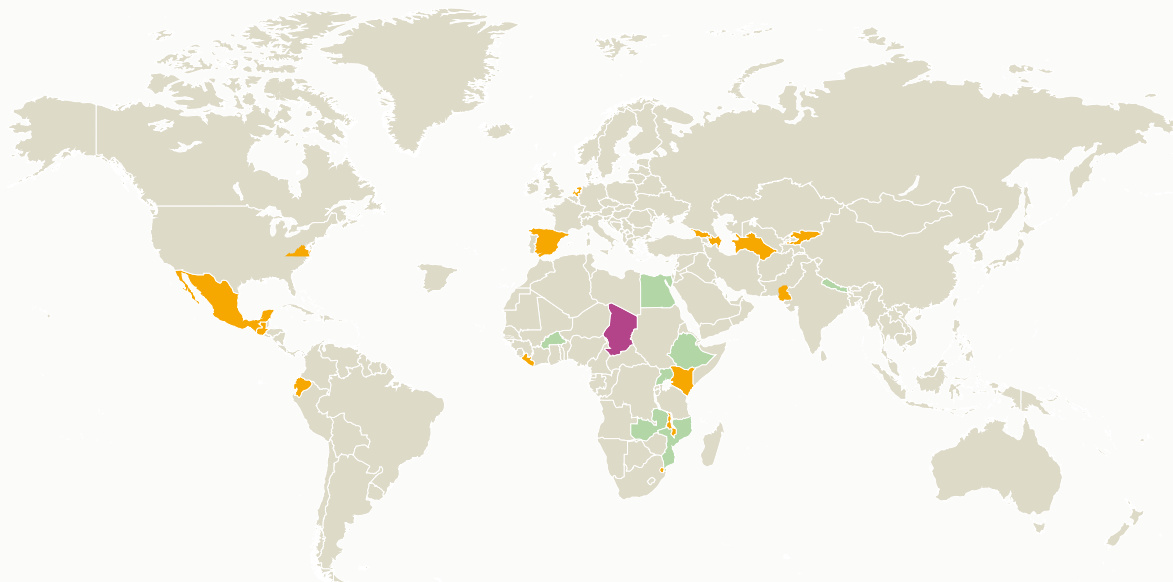
● COUNTRIES WHICH CO-SPONSORED THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS ONLY

● COUNTRIES WHICH CO-SPONSORED THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ONLY

● COUNTRIES WHICH CO-SPONSORED BOTH THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS AND THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION

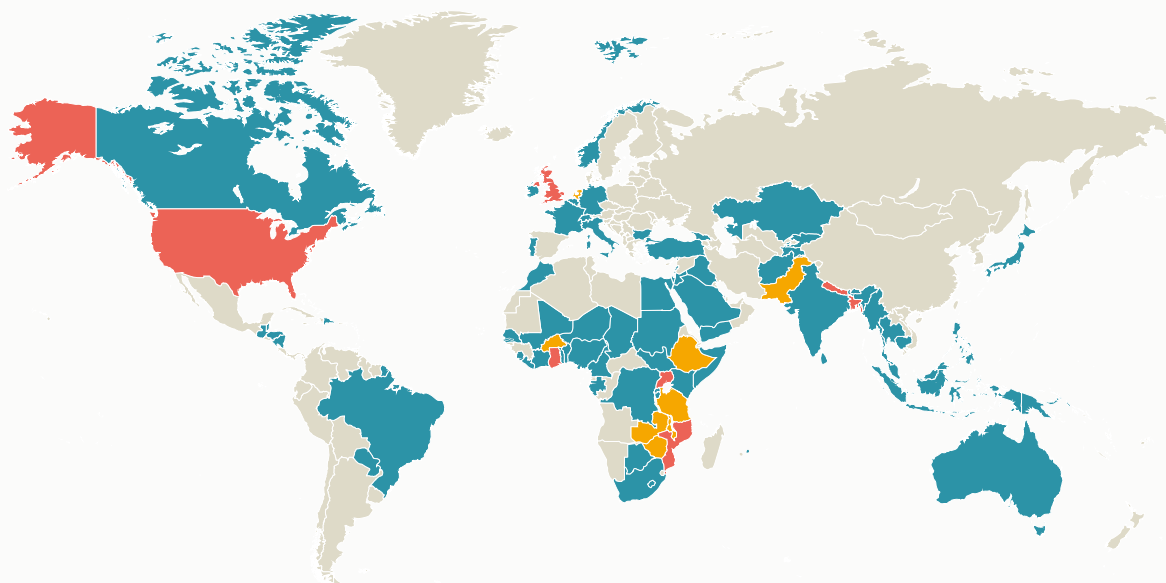


## 2. COUNTRIES WITH NATIONAL STRATEGIES & COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE MADE LEGAL REFORMS ON CHILD MARRIAGE SINCE 2011



- COUNTRIES WITH NATIONAL STRATEGIES
- COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE MADE LEGAL REFORMS
- COUNTRIES WITH NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND WHICH ALSO HAVE MADE LEGAL REFORMS

## 3. COUNTRIES WITH *GIRLS NOT BRIDES* MEMBERS, COUNTRIES WITH *GIRLS NOT BRIDES* NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS & COUNTRIES WITH NATIONAL COALITIONS WORKING ON CHILD MARRIAGE



- COUNTRIES WITH *GIRLS NOT BRIDES* MEMBERS
- COUNTRIES WITH *GIRLS NOT BRIDES* NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
- COUNTRIES WITH NATIONAL COALITIONS DEVELOPED OR DEVELOPING (WHERE *GIRLS NOT BRIDES* MEMBERS ARE ALSO ENGAGED)

## 2.3 Building a movement

Five years ago, work was being undertaken in various parts of the world to address child marriage: brave individuals were tackling attitudes and practices within their own communities, and advocates were calling on governments to take the issue seriously. However, most of these activities were disparate and uncoordinated. Practitioners were generally not aware of other initiatives around the world, and often addressed the issue from different perspectives. There was no sense of a global agenda, nor was there a common narrative on the causes, consequences and solutions.

### Where are we today?

Perhaps the biggest lesson from the past five years is the realisation that child marriage is so widespread, so deep-rooted, and so complex that no one actor can find a solution alone. The Elders used their universal moral standing to open up a global discourse on child marriage, but it was clear that bringing an end to this global problem would require the collective action of committed individuals, activists, and organisations. In particular, the voices of girls already married or at risk of being married would need to be central, with support from boys and men, community leaders, parents, religious and traditional leaders, as well as those catalysing legal and policy change, such as parliamentarians and inter-governmental bodies.

**“When we first came together in Ethiopia in 2011, we developed a vision for what our global movement could achieve. We still have much to do but we have come far in a relatively short time. As an agenda it is already on the top of development and social change. But where we have not done so well I believe is to bring this message back home. I would like to see not only national pacts but a situation where you have government, private sector, not-for-profit organisations, religious organisations, academia, non-governmental organisations, parents’ associations, all of them taking responsibility for change. We are part of a family – a powerful chain of solidarity, of hard work, in which we know defeat is not a choice. We are millions and we are moving in waves. We have to remember change will happen when we touch the millions of families where girls are.”** Graça Machel, Co-founder and Champion of *Girls*

*Not Brides*, and a member of The Elders

## Diverse actors start to speak out and take action to address child marriage

While traditional religious structures have sometimes been a barrier to efforts to end child marriage, increasingly religious and traditional leaders have taken a stand against child marriage. From traditional chiefs in Zambia stopping marriages, to Hindu religious leaders in Nepal making public commitments to taking action, to religious scholars issuing guidance in Egypt, there are encouraging signs showing the role that religious leaders can play in the movement to end child marriage.

Various UN agencies started speaking out about the importance of tackling child marriage, and increased their work in this area. The African Union launched a continent-wide campaign and created specific mandates to keep child marriage on the agenda: Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda was appointed as Goodwill Ambassador for the Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa and Fatima Delladj-Sebaa as AU Special Rapporteur on child marriage to monitor the human rights impact of child marriage and engage in dialogue with governments, civil society organisations and other actors.



© Reuters/Khaled Abdullah

## United Nations programme efforts to address child marriage

Over the past few years, the UN has taken bold steps to garner support to address child marriage. In addition to the Sustainable Development Goals target and UN resolutions, key leaders raised their voices in support of ending the practice, and agencies and programmes have started to include child marriage in their recommendations and work streams.

In March 2016, the UN's flagship UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme for accelerating action to end child marriage was launched to support more than 2.5 million adolescent girls at risk of and affected by

child marriage. The programme will focus efforts in 12 countries across four regions with high child marriage prevalence: South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Nepal), the Middle East (Yemen), West and Central Africa (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger and Sierra Leone) and Eastern and Southern Africa (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia). The Programme aims to empower girls and address child marriage through a multi-sectoral approach from the local to national level, involving key sectors such as child protection, education, health, justice and social protection among others.

Parliamentarians have started to mobilise around the issue calling for stronger legal and policy frameworks to address child marriage. By partnering with these networks, *Girls Not Brides* has helped to inform them of solutions to end the practice and to connect them with civil society organisations working towards legal and policy change.

## Parliamentarians across Africa call for action

In 2014, Parliamentarians for Global Action, a network of 1,300 legislators in 143 countries, launched a Global Parliamentary Campaign to End Child, Early and Forced Marriage to raise parliamentarians' awareness of the issue. In 2015, a *Global Parliamentary Declaration to End Child, Early and Forced Marriage* was signed by over 600 parliamentarians worldwide, calling for a strong target to end child, early and forced marriage in the Sustainable Development Goals and committing to ensure its implementation in their countries.

High profile figures across all walks of life are speaking out about the importance of addressing the issue.

**“If I had been married by the age of 9/10 I would not have been where I am today... without more women as doctors, engineers, architects and artists like me, how can our economies prosper? With child marriage nobody wins... for the girls, for families, for our societies, we need to end child marriage... We now need to take this message to every village and every family where people need to be convinced.”** Angelique Kidjo, UNICEF's

Goodwill Ambassador on Child Marriage, and musician.

The role of youth in the movement to end child marriage has been increasingly recognised, both as individual role models taking a stand against the practice and as networks of youth speaking out on behalf of their peers.



© Girls Not Brides / Vavice Mushauo

## Youth voices join forces to call for more action to tackle child marriage

Ahead of the Africa Girl Summit held in Zambia in November 2015, *Girls Not Brides*, in partnership with Youth for Change, brought together young activists from across Africa, for a youth-led session highlighting the important role of African youth in tackling child marriage. The result was a strong youth presence at the Summit and a strengthened network of committed youth champions across the continent, holding their governments to account on their international and regional commitments to end child marriage.

**"We have particular influence over our peers as educators and one should not underestimate the power of a united youth standing up for what they believe in. As youths, we know our peers and those at risk and we are in a better position to come up with viable solutions to the problem."** Mpho Elizabeth Mpofo, The Voice of Africa, Zimbabwe

The public profile of child marriage has also been given a boost through increased media attention globally. Over the last five years, we have seen a marked increase in the number of child marriage stories being covered in influential media outlets around the world.

There has also been a noted increase in the quality of this coverage; stories today are less sensationalised and give a more realistic portrayal of young girls and the issues they face. Beyond stating the problem of child marriage, they also explore solutions. Coverage has become more nuanced: while earlier stories of child marriage tended to focus on sensational stories of girls pressured into marriage by their families, more recent stories describe the multiple factors which lead girls into early marriage and the experiences they face as child brides.

### **Building a common civil society agenda at the heart of the movement**

At the core of the movement to end child marriage have been civil society voices, strengthened and

united through their membership of *Girls Not Brides*. Gaining an average of more than 100 members a year since being formed in 2011, as of August 2016 the Partnership has over 600 members from more than 80 countries. They vary immensely in size and scope – from very small grassroots organisations to large international NGOs – and in how they approach their work – through a focus on health, education, child protection, women's rights, and faith based initiatives.

**These organisations have come together within the Partnership because together they are stronger: collaborating to advocate for change, sharing knowledge and new insights, and gaining power in unity.**



© Girls Not Brides / Vaitice Mushauro



## Strengthening the Partnership: the Global Member Meeting

In 2015, 240 individuals representing *Girls Not Brides* members in 62 countries came together in Casablanca, Morocco, to strengthen the global partnership through collaboration, networking and shared learning, and to accelerate efforts to end child marriage around the world. Members were joined by a small number of external experts from UN agencies and the AU, and donor representatives. Participants shared experiences and lessons learned, and created new connections with fellow *Girls Not Brides* members from around the world.

The impact of the meeting was felt far beyond the event itself. Participants shared their learnings with colleagues from their organisations and networks at home after the event, and many have continued to work with someone they had met at the meeting. Most members said they found the Global Member Meeting re-energising and that it provided them with a renewed sense of commitment to their work.

**“At the Global Meeting we shared our programming about empowering girls and afterwards someone contacted us to ask whether they could use our idea. They have now launched a similar programme. The biggest strength of *Girls Not Brides* is the sharing of learning.”**

Marissa Kokkoros, Aura Freedom International

In a number of countries, civil society organisations have come together to accelerate progress to end child marriage in their country and have formed national alliances, coalitions or networks. Coalitions or alliances have formed or begun to emerge in 15 countries (including Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe), of which seven have aligned with *Girls*

*Not Brides* as official National Partnerships (Bangladesh, Ghana, Mozambique, Nepal, Uganda, UK, US). They play an important role in ensuring national level work is genuinely grounded in the realities of those girls affected by child marriage and highlight the needs of community based groups who are most aware of the contexts in which child marriage happens.



## Civil society organisations working together to maximise impact in Mozambique

In 2014, over 40 civil society organisations came together to form *Girls Not Brides Mozambique*. The National Partnership worked with the Ministry of Women & Social Affairs to launch a campaign on child marriage and has since become the government's main civil society partner which helped

develop the national strategy on child marriage. By developing joint advocacy and communications strategies, members increased their influence and improved their access to government officials. The group is now seen as a key stakeholder in national level efforts to end child marriage in Mozambique.

## Looking forward

The past five years have shown the incredible power of a global movement, in terms of creating solidarity and building unprecedented momentum towards tackling child marriage. Yet the global context is constantly changing with, for example, growing humanitarian crises as a result of natural disasters, conflict and displacement, increasing religious fundamentalism, and narrowing space for civil society in many countries. The global movement to end child marriage will need to constantly assess how to navigate these challenges, particularly to avoid losing momentum.

The global movement will need also to grow in places where child marriage has yet to be recognised as a problem and strengthen in places where more action is needed. It will be important to continue to show the urgency of the issue, but also show that it is something which can be addressed. Stories of change, and new ways of presenting and understanding the issue, will be critical.

There is real potential for national level change in many countries. For that to happen, alignment and coordination among those working to address child marriage will be important, as will outreach to new allies and collaborators. It will also be essential to ensure the movement is not only active in capital cities but also connected to grassroots organisations and local authorities across countries.

The role of youth as agents of change will be critical. The movement will need to continue building youth leadership capacity while opening up pathways and spaces for young people to exercise influence at multiple levels. Creating spaces for systematic coordination for youth and forging connections and partnerships (youth-youth and youth-adult) will ensure young people take centre stage to deliver a unified message against the practice.

## 2.4 Creating an understanding of what needs to be done

At a time when there was limited interest in funding child marriage work, organisations and researchers often struggled to conduct the type of in-depth research necessary to describe the extent of the problem, its impact and to evaluate solutions.

Five years ago, a handful of reports and analyses had emerged examining the problem of child marriage from a number of lenses – legal, public health, child protection or education. There was also some initial work underway to identify promising solutions, which were being piloted by civil society in some of the most affected areas of the world. However, it was clear that there was a significant gap in our global understanding of the scale and impact of child marriage and what it would take to end it. There was also a clear need for an overarching discussion on how different pieces of the puzzle fit together to create an effective response.

### Where are we today?

Over the past five years we have seen new evidence emerging on the massive scale of child marriage around the world, and highlighting that it is in everyone's interest to bring an end to it. It has been recognised that the practice increases in conflict and humanitarian crisis and is also of concern from a foreign policy perspective. Crucially, child marriage has been increasingly seen both as a human rights issue as well as a development issue, with links to slavery and forced labour. We are also starting to see interesting analyses discussing the strain that child marriage places on a country's economic growth prospects and highlighting the cost of inaction. *Girls Not Brides* has been compiling key reports on its website.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that there is increasing interest and analyses from both those traditionally involved in gender issues, and also those not typically addressing issues like child marriage, such as the US Council on Foreign Relations and the World Bank. Recognition of the issue across different sectors over the past five years has demonstrated the cross-sectoral nature of child marriage.

For example:

- ▶ Reducing child marriage is one of the six critical outcomes of the World Health Organization's Guidelines on Preventing Early Pregnancy and Poor Reproductive Outcomes among Adolescents in Developing Countries (2011).
- ▶ Prevention of child marriage is one of the areas of high returns on investment in health and a 'multisectoral enabler' in the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health (2016-2030).
- ▶ Ending child marriage was one of seven calls to action to improve nutrition for adolescent girls at the International Summit on the Nutrition of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (2015).
- ▶ Addressing child marriage as a barrier to education is increasingly recognised as important by a range of global education actors (e.g. at the 2015 Oslo Summit hosted by Norway and at the 2016 Girls' Education Forum hosted by the UK).
- ▶ Child marriage is recognised as a risk factor for violence by the new Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and work to address it is included in the IMPACT guidelines; a package of evidence based guidelines for addressing violence against children (2016).

<sup>4</sup> The *Girls Not Brides* Reports & Publications page can be found at: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/reports-and-publications/>



**“Child marriage needs a comprehensive approach with strategic actions. The more sectors we can involve in finding solutions to child marriage, the more we can make it work.”** Sophia Piral, Asociación Pro Bienestar de la Familia de Guatemala (APROFAM), Guatemala

### Learning about approaches to addressing child marriage, and what works

The past five years have seen a marked increase in our understanding of what a comprehensive response to child marriage should involve. A number of practical tools have been developed to assist different constituencies to integrate child marriage into their work.

*Girls Not Brides* has created more spaces for learning about the benefits and risks of different approaches, including by: holding dedicated global and regional meetings of members and other experts; taking advantage of existing conferences to connect members and discuss learning, and by facilitating learning exchanges. In addition, webinars and online discussions on issues of interest to the Partnership

have provided a space for continued interaction beyond face-to-face meetings.

With the growing interest in child marriage from a variety of perspectives, it became increasingly clear that there was no global consensus about what strategies and interventions would be needed to end child marriage. While many organisations had their own theories of change to guide their work, *Girls Not Brides* developed a Theory of Change for the movement as a whole, to unite all actors around what needs to be done to end child marriage. It highlighted the need for comprehensive approaches, and that no one organisation can do it all. It also provided a basis to develop indicators that could measure progress towards ending child marriage in different contexts.



## Uniting the global movement to end child marriage with a shared Theory of Change

In 2014, *Girls Not Brides* consulted with members and partners to develop a Theory of Change, which would serve to build a shared understanding of what it would take to achieve our vision of a world without child marriage. With the input of 150 *Girls Not Brides* members and partners, the Theory of Change represents a collective vision of the different

approaches needed to address child marriage. The framework is applicable across regions and cultures, describing how change happens and identifying strategies to bring about that change. The development of this framework helped shine a light on where programming efforts were being focused and where further work was needed.

The Theory of Change has helped the Partnership in a number of ways:

- 1 To get a comprehensive picture of all that is needed to end child marriage
- 2 To show the link between any one member's efforts to the global vision for change
- 3 To assist members in demonstrating the impact they have towards achieving those common goals
- 4 To support resource mobilisation efforts for members
- 5 To support collaborative advocacy work
- 6 To inform national strategies

In many countries, the Theory of Change<sup>5</sup> has been used as a starting point to reflect on national priorities; which are the best entry points; what are the biggest challenges and what roles should be played by whom. It has been used to inform strategies of high prevalence countries like Nepal, or work-planning and funding of donor governments like Canada.

**“We have used the Theory of Change in many different ways: to develop a multi-dimensional integrated programme, to train other NGOs and government functionaries, and to support our advocacy work. It is very useful for innovating untested interventions.”** Ashok Dyalchand, Institute of Health

Management, Pachod, India

<sup>5</sup> The Theory of Change can be found at: [www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage-theory-of-change/](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage-theory-of-change/)

## Looking forward

There is still a lot that we need to learn about child marriage. Some of the biggest gaps which must be filled to better inform policies and programmes to tackle child marriage were identified by a number of organisations together in 2014 and remain relevant today:

- ▶ **Prevalence:** the need for more data, especially to show differences by age group, and trends in age of marriage compared to other relevant indicators.
- ▶ **Causes:** changes in drivers of child marriage in well studied areas, and more research in less studied areas. Analysis of ‘protective factors’ which prevent child marriage in places where it would be expected. Impact of structural factors (urbanisation, migration, climate change, changes in labour markets, civil strife and conflict) on child marriage.
- ▶ **Consequences:** longer-term research on the intergenerational impact of child marriage and its relationship to social, development, health and gender issues, and on health and social consequences beyond maternal health.
- ▶ **Prevention:** essential components of child marriage interventions to scale up, mechanisms for delivering these interventions, and the cost of scaling up. Effective implementation of laws and pros and cons of sanctions compared to incentives. Better understanding of what works in humanitarian contexts.

- ▶ **Supporting child brides:** understanding how to support the development of equitable relationships between married girls and their (often older) husbands, their levels of access to services, and the needs of separated, divorced or widowed girls.

The number of programmes addressing child marriage has increased dramatically around the world. Yet, there is still a need for more high quality evaluations, so we can better understand what works and what does not. We also need to share learning to inform better programmes and policies.

Lessons from other movements will be critical to improve our understanding of how social norm change around child marriage will take place, especially at scale, and what a strong ‘multi-sectoral’ response will look like in a range of national and sub-national contexts.

Finally, an overriding challenge is to make sure that efforts to end child marriage recognise the underlying gender inequality and patriarchy driving the practice. While programmatic efforts will vary in scope and focus, it will be crucial for everyone in the movement to keep coming back to our joint vision of a world free of child marriage where girls are able to achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

**“Our field needs to continue deeply analysing how patriarchy, sexual norms and other power dynamics affect girls and limit their choices in diverse contexts across the world. We need to shift from thinking about sexuality as something closed, personal and individual, to seeing it as a lens through which to examine fundamental questions about how social norms shape all of our families, communities and societies. It’s a critical next step, so that we can deepen the impact of our research studies, programme strategies and advocacy agendas – and make sure all those efforts lead to real improvements for girls and the quality of their lives and relationships.”**

Jacqueline Hart, American Jewish World Service, USA

## 2.5 Funding for the field

Significant change at community level requires adequate financial resources. However, before 2011, there was little funding specifically targeted towards ending child marriage, either within the budgets of high prevalence governments or through official development aid.

Given the range of solutions to tackle child marriage, interventions tended to fall within donor programming on girls' empowerment or sectoral investments in related fields such as education, justice, health and social protection. However, because these interventions were often not tracked as child marriage programmes, it was and remains difficult to say what level of investment there actually is in child marriage prevention and support to married girls. What was generally clear though was that funding for ending child marriage was inadequate.

### Where are we today?

An important contribution of the movement has been to increase the profile of child marriage globally to help generate more funding and investment to bring child marriage to an end. Investments in interventions directly tackling child marriage have accelerated in the past five years.

However, the response remains inadequate compared to the scope of the problem. Grassroots organisations working directly on the frontline in communities still face significant difficulties accessing funding.

At the Clinton Global Initiative in 2011, the Ford Foundation, Nike Foundation, NoVo Foundation and The Elders jointly committed to raise US\$2 million to support efforts to end child marriage and establish a network of donors to support programmes globally.

**“We have very limited access to the funding sources and get the funds for very short duration (1 or 2 years)... we face challenges to sustain the programme to create long lasting social impact.”** *A Girls Not Brides member from India*



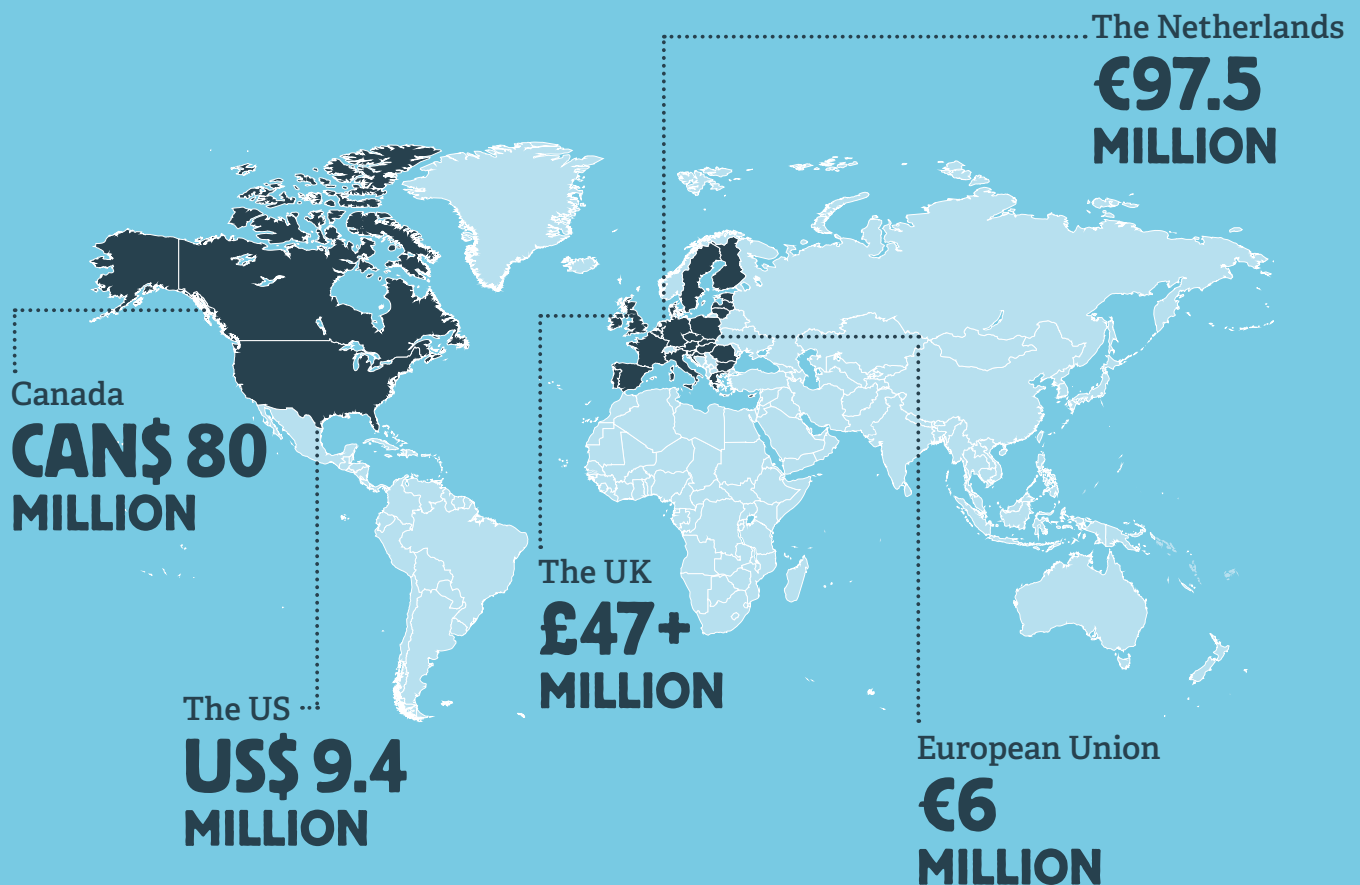
**“It’s a very human issue, one at the centre of a wide range of challenges girls and women still face. We don’t think we can work on reproductive health, women’s rights, girls’ education, or women’s economic empowerment without addressing a widespread and fundamental issue like this one.”**

Luis Ubiñas, then President of the the Ford Foundation at the launch of *Girls Not Brides* in 2011

Since then, more private foundations have made commitments specifically to address child marriage, with at least a dozen now directly funding work to

end the practice. Notably, the Ford Foundation and the Kendeda Fund have made significant pledges, US\$25 and US\$23 million respectively.

**Over the past five years, donor governments have increasingly committed to funding efforts to end child marriage including the following estimates:\***



\* Estimating the total funding for work on child marriage is complicated due to the lack of reporting, multiple funding streams and overlapping initiatives.

These bilateral funds support a range of actors. A significant proportion of the bilateral development assistance specifically on child marriage has been given to UN agencies, particularly the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme which was launched in early 2016. With a five-year total budget of approximately US\$95 million, bilateral contributions include CAN\$40 million from Canada, £25 million from the UK, €20 million from the Netherlands and €6 million from the European Union, and also an unknown amount from Italy.

**“We considered joining.... the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Initiative to end CEFM after our participation at the *Girls Not Brides* and Donor Working Group on CEFM in Casablanca in May 2015.”**

**EU representative** (The EU subsequently contributed €6 million to the UN's Programme), quoted from *Girl Summit One Year On: Report on Commitments*.

Large international NGOs have received significant amounts of funding as well, often for programmes that support national or community based partners in high prevalence countries. Some funding has been made available directly to small community based organisations through bilateral assistance, including CAN\$4 million through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. While a number of global thematic or regional grassroots funds have begun to include child marriage-related work in their grant making, Amplify Change is the first to include child marriage as an explicit call for proposals in 2016. It is still unclear how much funding is going directly to child marriage work by small grassroots organisations, but we know that the UK has contributed £8 million and the Netherlands €4.8 million to the Amplify Change fund.

In addition, these and other donor governments are beginning to integrate child marriage in other development assistance programmes, such as the US\$385 million DREAMS initiative to reduce HIV infections among

adolescent girls and young women in 10 sub-Saharan African countries, funded by the US government's PEPFAR initiative and several private foundations and businesses.

Small donor and crowdfunding organisations like Catapult, Giving What We Can and GlobalGiving also now promote individual contributions to organisations that work on child marriage, and this has allowed direct funding to some community based groups. *Girls Not Brides* worked with Catapult and GlobalGiving to promote the work of its members within these networks.

Funders have also been coming together to coordinate their activities on child marriage. A group of private foundations is regularly convened by the Ford Foundation. Canada, the Netherlands and *Girls Not Brides* have brought together key funders for strategic conversations on a regular basis. Donors in the field have increasingly recognised the importance of talking to each other to share learning and discuss how to maximise impact and avoid duplication.



## Looking forward

Much more needs to be known about what funding there is, the kinds of interventions it supports, where it reaches and the impact it has. However, it is clear that the lack of adequate funding continues to constrain the speed of progress in addressing child marriage around the world.

More long-term funding is needed to support the complex and often lengthy process of changing social norms. There is still a wide funding gap for community level organisations in high prevalence countries, something that has been highlighted consistently by *Girls Not Brides* members as a barrier to their work. More leadership and investment is also needed to support initiatives with potential for going to scale.

In the face of other global concerns and decreases in official development aid in many countries, ensuring funding continues to support women's and girls' issues will be critical.

Finally, there is a major gap between policy commitments towards ending child marriage and funding available for implementing national strategies. More funding (both domestic and international) is needed to support national work, with efforts to prevent child marriage and support married girls costed and resourced within national budgets. This includes funding for implementation of national strategies; programmes aimed at preventing child marriage and supporting married girls and sectoral funding towards solutions that we know work such as girls' education or sexual and reproductive health services.



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## 3 WHAT NEXT?

**Progress towards ending child marriage over the past five years has demonstrated that we can have significant successes if we work together across countries, cultures and disciplines.**

Given the size of the problem and the complex challenges still ahead, it is clear that we will need to continue to work together if we are to overcome them and ensure that girls everywhere are free from child marriage.

This report draws on consultations carried out by *Girls Not Brides* as we develop our next strategy for the Partnership. We will be using these learnings to help

us determine how we will work together as a global civil society partnership over the coming four years.

We hope that this report will also spark reflection among other actors in the global movement; contribute to conversations on how we can work together to accelerate progress to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals target to end child marriage by 2030, and build a brighter future for girls everywhere.

### How will change happen?

**While context matters – and what needs to happen in one country or one region is different from another – there are a number of principles which stand true for how we see change happening no matter where we work. These are broadly outlined in the *Girls Not Brides* Theory of Change:**

- 1** Change happens locally and must be driven from within communities to be sustainable. This means that efforts to address child marriage must be rooted in local realities, and must be designed with input from affected girls themselves. The voices of girls, including at-risk and married girls, should be central in the movement.
- 2** We all have a role to play in creating an enabling environment for that change to happen: at community, national, regional, and international levels. We must work together to make sure that child marriage is addressed in a holistic way; no one organisation can do everything. We need different kinds of organisations working together to tackle the issue.
- 3** Social change takes time, so we need long-term sustainable efforts that tackle root causes.
- 4** We must learn from what works and what doesn't.
- 5** Child marriage is not an isolated issue. It requires an integrated response which puts girls at the centre but which also recognises the reasons that families marry their daughters young. The response also needs to recognise that the wider environment within which child marriage happens is important.
- 6** Work on child marriage should always be linked to the wider phenomenon of gender inequality and patriarchy.



## The role of different stakeholders

We all have a role to play in the next phase of the global movement. Only when all of us see the role that we can play and we act towards a collective vision will we be able to make significant progress.

This includes:



### Girls and boys

- Speak up and act to challenge child marriage and mobilise peers and the wider community.
- For girls who are or have been married, consider sharing their own personal experiences and take part in broader efforts to end child marriage.



### Families and communities

- Act as role models by not marrying girls off.
- Encourage education for girls.
- Challenge gender norms by changing expectations for women and girls.



### Those who create an enabling environment for change

- **International bodies:** encourage and monitor action across countries; provide technical assistance; ensure child marriage is addressed across development and rights agendas; hold governments accountable.
- **Governments:** show long-term political leadership to tackle child marriage; develop comprehensive cross-government, well-resourced policies and strategies, accompanied by strong and rigorous implementation frameworks.
- **Civil society:** engage with governments on implementation to target the most vulnerable; share local knowledge about what works; hold governments accountable.
- **Parliamentarians:** be role models for their communities; draft effective legal frameworks; ensure better resourced policies and programmes from government.
- **Youth:** amplify the voices of those affected or at-risk of child marriage.
- **Donors:** support interventions which aim to prevent child marriage and support married girls; share learning about evidence.
- **Media:** encourage greater action on the issue; highlight solutions.
- **Religious and traditional leaders:** foster attitudes and behaviour change in the community; collaborate to spread larger-scale messages.

# WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Our discussions with members and partners have consistently pointed to a number of key actions that will be crucial for us all in the immediate term:

## 1 Hold governments accountable to their international, regional and national commitments,

in particular to developing ambitious plans for implementing target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals with clear indicators for progress.

## 2 Develop, implement and fund comprehensive policies, programmes and plans

to end child marriage and support married girls, in partnership with civil society and other key stakeholders. This might involve the development of targeted national strategies and/or integration of child marriage into related strategies for girls and children.

## 3 Continue to grow and strengthen the movement

by involving new stakeholders, developing new partnerships, and supporting new champions. Ensure that young people are at the forefront of the movement.

## 4 Celebrate and share successes,

including case studies of individuals overcoming child marriage; of communities who have united to promote a better future for their girls, of policy change or programmatic initiatives which have had a large-scale impact and ultimately of regions and countries where child marriage has been tackled in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

## 5 Engage related sectors

such as those addressing education, health or violence – at global, regional, national and local levels, so that they integrate a focus on ending child marriage into their work.

## 6 Learn from what works and what doesn't

so that efforts to end child marriage are based on the latest evidence. Ensure the necessary research, documentation and evaluation of programmes and policies, and learn from other sectors and initiatives which address social norm change.

## 7 Increase funding for efforts which prevent child marriage and support married girls,

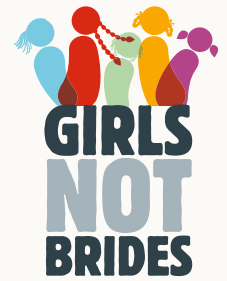
and ensure the necessary support for grassroots groups working directly with those affected. In particular, target investment in education and health programmes for girls, as well as in initiatives which tackle social norm change over the long term.



# 'WE ARE MILLIONS AND WE ARE MOVING IN WAVES.'

## IT TAKES A MOVEMENT: REFLECTING ON FIVE YEARS OF PROGRESS TOWARDS ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

*Girls Not Brides* is a global partnership of over 600 civil society organisations from more than 80 countries committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential.



The Global Partnership  
to End Child Marriage

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