



Day of the African Child 2015: Suggested messages and useful resources on child marriage in Africa – For use by *Girls Not Brides* members

For the past few years, *Girls Not Brides* members have used Day of the African Child as an opportunity to work together to bring attention to child marriage. This year, the theme of Day of the African Child, “25 Years after the Adoption of the African Children’s Charter: Accelerating our Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage in Africa” is particularly relevant for us. Not only does it bring the continent’s attention on the issue that bring us all together, but it does so by highlighting the importance of partnership – a core value for *Girls Not Brides*.

On 16 June 2015, while *Girls Not Brides* members across Africa have made plans to celebrate Day of the African Child, we will also have a chance to demonstrate the strength of our Partnership by speaking with one voice. The *Girls Not Brides* secretariat is therefore proposing the following selection of advocacy messages for use by members as part of their already planned activities. We hope these will promote consistency and interconnection in our respective actions.

Members are welcome to pick from and adapt these messages according to their local context and to the targets of their advocacy efforts (e.g. governments, civil society actors, regional and/or sub-regional institutions, donor and development agencies).

You will find below a short list of suggested messages, supported by a number or supporting facts. For more detailed information, kindly refer to [Girls Not Brides’ brief on child marriage in Africa](#). An list of useful resources is available at the end of this document.

Top-line message: On Day of the African Child, we celebrate the increased recognition of child marriage as a major development issue in Africa. We believe that Africa’s collective efforts can be accelerated if we work better together through effective partnership. As *Girls Not Brides* members, we are doing our part and ready to work with all in a regional movement to end child marriage.

Main recommendations:

- To all: Join the movement! From policymakers to community members, we all have a role to play in ending child marriage. We must work together in partnership to end child marriage in a generation.
- To African governments: Develop and implement national strategies and action plans that are inclusive, comprehensive and well-resourced.
Action plans should include initiatives to empower girls, mobilise families and communities as agents of change, provide adequate services (particularly health, education and justice services), and provide an enabling legal and policy framework.
- To the African Union: Translate the ongoing political will into tangible, positive change in the lives of girls at risk of marriage and married girls.
Work in partnership with civil society organisations and other relevant parties to accelerate and multiply the effects of the existing commitments.



Supporting message #1: Child marriage is a common concern across Africa, which jeopardises the future of our continent. In Africa, ending child marriage is an urgent task.

- Child marriage prevalence rates vary from one country to another, but no African country is completely free from child marriage.
- A marriage involving a girl under age 18 can have dramatic consequences for the girl involved, for her community, her country, and for Africa as a whole.
- If we do not accelerate change now, the devastating impact of child marriage will increase.

Selected proof points:

- Globally, 15 million girls are married before the age of 18 every year. That is the equivalent of the entire population of Zimbabwe or Mali.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, 40% of women are married as children. Africa is home to 15 of the 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage in the world.
- Girls who give birth under age 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than young women in their 20s. 65% of all cases of obstetric fistula occur in girls under the age of 18.
- Over 60% of child brides in developing countries have had no formal education.¹
- The persistence of child marriage has hindered Africa's efforts to achieve six of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs 1 to 6).
- If we do nothing to accelerate progress, the number of child brides in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to double by 2050, and Africa will become the region with the highest prevalence worldwide.²

Supporting message #2: Due to African leaders' increased political commitment to end child marriage, the context for efforts to address child marriage in Africa is more favourable than ever.

- African leaders and institutions have finally recognised the importance of addressing child marriage. Their renewed commitment to end the practice should be commended as an essential first step.
- It is now time to act and translate this commitment into tangible, positive change in the lives of girls at risk of marriage, and of girls who are already married.

Selected proof points:

- The African Union launched a [Campaign to end child marriage in Africa](#) in May 2014. A [Special Rapporteur](#) and a [Goodwill Ambassador](#) have been appointed.
- African Heads of States are expected to adopt an [African Common Position on child marriage](#) during the AU June Summit.
- An increasing number of African governments are developing national strategies, action plans, campaigns or other initiatives aimed at ending child marriage in their country (e.g. Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia).

¹ UNFPA, 2012. [Marrying too Young: End Child Marriage.](#)

² UNICEF, 2014. [Ending child marriage: Progress and prospects.](#)



Supporting message #3: Effective partnership is essential to accelerate the ongoing efforts to end child marriage. As civil society organisations, we are playing our part and are ready to work with others.

- We know what works to end child marriage: CSOs across Africa have developed innovative, effective solutions.
- Brought together by *Girls Not Brides*, hundreds of African CSOs have come together to pool their expertise and solutions and to speak with one common voice.

Selected proof points:

- *Girls Not Brides* members working in sectors such as health, education, poverty alleviation, human rights and humanitarian response are developing programmes to prevent child marriage and mitigate its effects on child brides. They operate at the community, national and regional levels.
- *Girls Not Brides* members have contributed to the development of a common [Theory of Change](#) on child marriage, which outlines the range of approaches needed to address child marriage.

Useful resources by *Girls Not Brides*

The following resources have been developed by the Girls Not Brides secretariat to support the work of members. Do not hesitate to use, refer or link to them as part of your messaging and activities on Day of the African Child.

Briefs and factsheets:

- [Child marriage in Africa: A brief by Girls Not Brides.](#)
- [Understanding the scale of child marriage: A user guide by Girls Not Brides](#)
- [Overview of African instruments, commitments and initiatives related to child marriage](#)
- [African governments and regional commitments related to child marriage](#)
- [The role of parliamentarians in ending child marriage](#)

Infographics:

- [No time to wait: End child marriage in Africa](#)
- [Child marriage: A global problem too long ignored](#)
- [Child marriage: A violation of human rights](#)
- [No to child marriage! Yes to education for girls!](#)

Videos:

- [The world we want: End child marriage](#)
- [Girls Not Brides: Working in Partnership to End Child Marriage](#)
- [Together: Ending child marriage in Zambia](#)