



**Statement on Child Marriage to the UN CRC on Uganda for the  
100<sup>th</sup> Pre-session**

**Girls Not Brides Uganda: The Ugandan Partnership to End Child Marriage (GNBU)**

Date of submission: 30/01/2025

## **1.0 Introduction**

This is a statement of the Girls Not Brides Uganda National Partnership (GNBU) following a written submission on child marriage in Uganda to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) for its 100th Pre-Session. GNBU, established in 2013, is a National Partnership of 144 member organisations working to end child marriage in Uganda. In 2016, it became an official National Partnership of Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage, a global partnership of over 1,400 civil society member organisations from more than 100 countries. GNBU members bring child marriage to subnational, national, and international attention, building an understanding of what it will take to end child marriage through advocacy for progressive laws, policies, and programs, including community-based interventions and institutional capacity strengthening.

## **2.0 Background and Overview of Submitted Shadow Report**

The shadow report GNBU submitted noted that while Uganda has legal frameworks to address child marriage, the prosecution of defilement cases does not take into consideration the best interests of the girl who has been defiled and impregnated as a result. There is a disconnect between policy formulation and implementation, and the mismatch in the legal framework on the minimum age of marriage makes the prosecution of child marriage cases difficult, especially in the absence of a centralised birth registry for children. The report further noted that significant barriers, such as unsafe learning environments, continue to inhibit the enrolment and retention of girls in school at all levels. Failure to provide meals for learners at school fuels child marriages as girls drop out of school due to hunger and are married off underage, while guidelines to support the re-entry of child mothers in school remain largely unimplemented.

The report recommended that the Government of Uganda should invest in girls' education, including the re-entry of child mothers into schools; harmonise existing laws to establish the minimum age of marriage to 18 years without exceptions; commit financial resources to the second National Strategy to end Child Marriage, including commissioning a midterm evaluation of the strategy; prioritise funding to the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development; and promote adolescent health and comprehensive sexuality education to improve health outcomes for girls, which has a direct impact on the prevalence of child marriage.



### 3.0 Reasserting Commitment to End Child Marriage

Since the shadow report was submitted in October 2024, new developments have occurred in Uganda’s policy landscape on child marriage that this statement highlights to the UN CRC.

**Expand implementation of the national strategy to end child marriage**—on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024, GNBU held the National Girl Summit, a national advocacy platform that convenes government, civil society organisations, political, religious, and cultural leaders, girls, and other institutions such as schools to deliberate on actions to end child marriage. At the Summit, the Ministry of Gender noted that the Second National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy was being implemented in only 34 of Uganda’s 143 districts. We call on the government to extend the implementation of the strategy to all districts, as 34 districts represent less than a quarter of the country. The government should commit to financial resources and not rely on CSO funding to implement the strategy. Furthermore, we recommend translating the strategy into accessible, user-friendly local languages, which would significantly enhance its impact.

**Actualise the EVAC pledge**—At the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC) in Bogota in November 2024, the government made a [pledge](#) committing to “Address negative social norms such as Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by scaling up the SASA! Together community-based approaches in 100 districts in the country by 2030.” SASA! is an activism and action programme that seeks to transform community attitudes, norms, and behaviours around gender and violence among women. The government also made pledges to create safe and enabling school environments, including the “Operationalize the Gender in Education Strategy, the 2015 VAC Strategy and the National Strategy for Girls Education.” We call on the government to translate these proposals into actionable programs.

**Pass the Marriage and Sexual Offences Bills into law**—GNBU and CSO stakeholders in Uganda continued engaging the Ugandan Parliament, where two bills—the Sexual Offences Bill and Marriage Bill 2024—were reintroduced in October and November 2024, respectively. The Bills directly criminalise child marriage. The Sexual Offences Bill, among others, seeks to enact a specific law on sexual offences for the effective prevention of sexual violence and to provide for the protection of victims during the trial of sexual offences. This would take into consideration the best interest of the girl who has been defiled and (in some cases) impregnated, a provision that’s currently missing in the prosecution of defilement cases. Clause 101 of the Marriage Bill further stipulates a 10-year jail sentence for anyone who organises, conducts, or witnesses a marriage involving a minor or marries someone below the age of 18. We call on the government through parliament to expedite the passage of these two bills into law.

**Review the National Strategy to End Child Marriage (2022–2026) and invest in education**—We reiterate our call that the government should invest in affordable, quality education, especially for girls, focusing on enrolment and retention in primary and secondary schools. Further, it is worth noting that the Uganda National Strategy to End Child Marriage will expire in 2026, just a year from now. However, the government has not conducted a midterm evaluation to assess progress and draw lessons for scaling up efforts. We recommend that the government urgently commission a midterm evaluation of the strategy.

### Appendix 1: List of GNBU Steering Committee Members Endorsing the Statement

No.	Organisation	Represented by	Designation
1.	Education & Development Opportunity – Uganda	Brian Mutebi	Executive Director
2.	Plan for Hope Initiative Uganda	Rossette Ainepurani	Team Leader
3.	Plan International Uganda	Patience Kemigisha	Technical Advisor, Influencing and Communications
4.	Action for Girls Uganda	Benjamin Tukei	Executive Director
5.	Youth in Action for Development Initiative	Adolf Muhumuza	Executive Director
6.	Child Rights Empowerment and Development Organization	Abdullah Byabasaijja	Executive Director
7.	Together Alive Health Initiative	Charles Tumwebaze	Executive Director
8.	Girls In School Initiative	Bashir Magezi	Team Leader
9.	Just Like My Child Foundation	Janat Nakigudde	Programs Manager
10.	Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum	Joyce Nakato	Team Leader
11.	Rhythm of Life Organisation	Sharon Kasacha	Youth Representative
12.	Touch the Heart Uganda	Ian Kikomeko	Team Leader