Re: Open letter regarding the target on child, early and forced marriage

Your Excellencies,

We, the undersigned organisations, write to you as members of Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage. We urge you and the members of the Open Working Group to maintain ending child, early and forced marriage as a separate target under Goal 5 (gender equality, empower women and girls everywhere). We welcome the revised zero draft of proposed goals and targets, however, we urge that target 5.3 be strengthened to reflect the explicit need to end child, early and forced marriage, by stating “eliminate all harmful practices, especially child, early and forced marriage”.

It has come to our attention that there have been efforts to subsume child, early and forced marriage under a target of ending violence against women. The causes of child, early and forced marriage are complex and systemic—ranging from gender inequality and poverty to customary practices. Subsuming this target under a target on violence against women risks masking the complex nature of this practice and the comprehensive strategies required to address it. Child, early and forced marriage is indeed a form of violence, and it is good to see that the international community is acknowledging this point. However, it is also a development and rights challenge that robs 14 million girls a year of their future and holds them – and their countries – back from achieving their potential.

Child, early and forced marriage has impeded the achievement of 6 of the 8 current Millennium Development Goals. It is impossible to reduce the numbers of women and children dying in childbirth and infancy if girls as young as 9 are marrying and having children when they are still children themselves. Girls who are married and out of school will not be able to contribute to their countries’ economic development and prosperity, perpetuating cycles of poverty. In fact, a recent study conducted by UNICEF in Nepal found that the economic cost of just the loss of schooling due to child, early and forced marriage was 3.87% of GDP.

A stand-alone target on child, early and forced marriage is not only important to reducing violence against women and girls, but it will also spur progress toward a whole range of associated health, economic and educational goals. For example, there are strong correlations between rates of child, early and forced marriage and levels of education for girls (over 60% of child brides in developing countries have had no formal education). By addressing child, early and forced marriage, efforts to improve education will be accelerated because it requires a deep look at the barriers to girls’ schooling.

Ending child, early and forced marriage is a concrete and measurable target that will contribute significantly to the achievement of gender equality while also accelerating efforts to achieve a safe, healthy and prosperous future for all.

We strongly encourage you and the members of the Open Working Group to maintain a stand-alone target to end child, early and forced marriage under proposed Goal 5.

Yours sincerely,
Aamaa Milan Kendra (AMK), Nepal
Action for Community Development, Uganda
ActionAid International
ADERE, Senegal
Afghan Women Skills Development Center, Afghanistan
Aid Afghanistan for Education, Afghanistan
Alliances for Africa, Nigeria
Amani Initiative, Uganda
American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
Amref Health Africa
Association Malienne Pour la Survie au Sahel, Mali
Anglican Children’s Programme, Zambia
Aschiana, Afghanistan
Association Camerounaise des Femmes Juristes, Cameroon
Association D’appui et d’Eveil Pugsada (ADEP), Burkina Faso
Association de Lutte Contre les Violences Faites aux Femmes, Cameroon
Association Maïa, Burkina Faso
Association Malienne Pour la Survie au Sahel, Mali
Association pour la Promotion du Genre et Développement Humain Durable, Cameroon
Association Tchadienne pour le Bien Etre Familial, Chad
AWAZ Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services, Pakistan

BHORE, Nepal
Blue Veins, Pakistan
CARE Ethiopia, Ethiopia
CARE International
Center for Reproductive Rights
Centre for Girls and Interaction, Malawi
Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa
Child Aid Uganda, Uganda
ChildHelp Inc. Liberia, Liberia
Children and Women Trust, Pakistan
Children’s Dignity Forum (CDF), Tanzania
CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, The Netherlands
Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN), Afghanistan
Civil Society Forum for Child Rights in Mozambique (ROSC), Mozambique
Cooperation for Peace and Development (CPD), Afghanistan
Coordination nationale des associations des jeunes pour la lutte contre le Sida, Chad
CULP - Centre for Unfolding Learning Potentials, India
Defence for Children International Sierra Leone (DCI - SL), Sierra Leone
Democratic Commission for Human Development, Pakistan
Development Institutions Network- DIN, Pakistan
Educate the Children, USA/Nepal
Empower People, India
Empowerment and Development Centre for Africa (EDCA Cameroon), Cameroon
Equality Now
Equilibres & Populations, France
Expanding Lives, USA
Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Gambia
FORWARD- Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development, UK
Foundation for Youth Empowerment, Malawi
Free the Slaves
G(irls)20, Canada
Girl Child Concerns, Nigeria
Girl Rising, USA
God Cares Orphan Organisation, Malawi
Grandmother Project, Italy
Grassroots Health Organization of Nigeria (GHON), Nigeria
GreeneWorks, USA
Halliru Youth Development and Empowerment Initiative (AYDI), Nigeria
HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, India
Her Turn, Nepal
Human Dignity Foundation
Human Rights Movement: "Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan", Kyrgyzstan
Independent Yemen Group, UK
Institute of Health Management Pachod (IHMP), India
Instituto Promundo, Brazil
Integrated Development Africa Programme (IDAP), Kenya
Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices, Ethiopia
Inter-Confessional AIDS Network, Cameroon
International Center for Research on Women
International Children's Center, Turkey
International HIV/AIDS Alliance
International Women's Health Coalition
Iranian & Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO), UK
Iraqi Al-Amal Association, Iraq
Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative, Nigeria
Jaag Welfare Movement, Pakistan
JAGRITI Trust, India
Joy for Children, Uganda
Kaana Foundation for Outreach Programs (KAFOP), Uganda
Kalinga Kusum Foundation, India
Kehkashan Development Organization (KDO), Pakistan
Kiota for Women's Health and Development (KIWOHEDE), Tanzania
Association LEAD TCHAD, Chad
Light Ethiopia, Ethiopia
Luchenza Youth Organisation, Malawi
Mamta Health Institute for Mother and Child, India
Men's Resources International, USA
National Council of Jewish Women, Inc, USA
National Integrated Development Association (NIDA-Pakistan), Pakistan
NGO PARASTOR, Tajikistan
Nkumu Fed-Fed, Cameroon
One By One, USA
ONG Génération Femme du Troisième Millénaire, Cote d'Ivoire
Voix de Femmes, Burkina Faso
Organisation for Public Interest (OPI), Pakistan
Organisation of African Youth, South Africa
Pathfinder International
Peace Foundation, Pakistan
Plan International
Population Action International
Population Matters, UK
Population Media Center, Inc., USA
Programme Intégré de Santé de Reproduction et Familial -PISR, Democratic Republic of Congo
Promundo-US, USA
Protect and Save the Children, Malaysia
Public Association Women's League of Creative Initiative, Kazakhstan
Red Cross Helpline About Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation, Norway
RESAEC (Réseau des Animateurs pour l'Education des Communautés), Cameroon
Roma Destiny, Bulgaria
Saare Tabitha, Cameroon
Safe Society, India
Samrakshak Samuha Nepal (SASANE), Nepal
Save the Children, India
School Girls Unite, USA
Seeds to Sew International LLC
Service for Peace Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone
SFBLSP_Burundi, Burundi
Shariatpur Development Society (SDS), Bangladesh
Shohratgarh Environmental Society, India
Sujag Sansar Organization, Pakistan
Association des Femmes Africaines Face au SIDA (SWAA) Niger, Niger
Terre des Femmes - Human Rights for Women, Germany
The Awakening, Pakistan
The Coexist Initiative, Kenya
The Hunger Project, USA
The Red Elephant Foundation, India
The Wellbeing Foundation, Nigeria
Tostan
U.S. Fund for UNICEF, USA
U.S. National Committee for UN Women, USA
Unchained At Last, USA
URMUL Trust, India
Vikalp Sansthan, India
Vital Voices Global Partnership
Voice of Grace Foundation, Cameroon
Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust (WLSA), Zambia
Women in Alternative Action - WAA, Cameroon
Women United for Economic Empowerment, Nigeria

Women Win, The Netherlands
Women Power Connect, India
Women's Initiative for Self-Actualization (WISA), Nigeria
Your Hope Is Remaining Trust, India
Youth Association for Development (YAD), Pakistan
Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana, Ghana
Youth Net and Counselling - YONECO, Malawi
Youth Partnership, Uganda
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association, Zimbabwe