

 **ZONTA** IN SUPPORT OF
INTERNATIONAL



END CHILD MARRIAGE TOOLKIT



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For more information, visit [unicef.org/protection/unfpa-unicef-global-programme-end-child-marriage](https://www.unicef.org/protection/unfpa-unicef-global-programme-end-child-marriage).

Child Marriage: Situation and Impacts

Child marriage has declined across most regions of the world in the past 25 years. Over the past decade alone, the proportion of young women who were married as children has dropped from 23% to 19%. While the global reduction in child marriage is to be celebrated, no region is yet on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of eliminating this harmful practice by 2030. For child marriage to end globally by this date, the rate of progress would need to be 20 times faster than the pace recorded over the last decade.

While South Asia has seen a steady decline, progress in other regions, such as Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa, has been slower or even stagnant. At the current rate, it would take 300 years to end child marriage.

Persistent crises, including public health emergencies, conflicts and natural disasters, heighten risks for adolescent girls, disrupting education and causing economic hardships. The COVID-19 pandemic alone was projected to result in an additional 10 million child marriages by 2030. Increases in conflict-related deaths and climate shocks significantly elevate the risk of child marriage due to increased insecurity, threats of sexual violence, infrastructure breakdowns, food insecurity, and economic pressures. These challenges, compounded by global megatrends such as migration, ageing, urbanization and technological advances, lead to intersecting forms of exclusion and discrimination affecting adolescent girls.

Despite these conditions, the Global Programme continues to maintain advocacy and technical support to enhance the capacity of governments to end child marriage through national and subnational plans, as well as through strengthening coordination between sectors and service providers.

Program Overview

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) joined forces in March 2016 and launched a joint [Global Programme to End Child Marriage](#). The multi-country effort is focusing on bolstering the systems that provide alternatives to child marriage, including protection, education and health care.

It is working to address root causes such as poverty and harmful cultural norms and practices. The ultimate goals are to reduce child marriage rates, increase education levels and decrease the number of girls who give birth as adolescents.

The Global Programme to End Child Marriage is tackling the core economic, social and cultural causes of child marriage, and is targeting girls who are at risk of child marriage or who are already in a union (ages 10-19) in 12 countries that have high rates of child marriage: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.



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These countries were selected because they have a high prevalence of child marriage, government engagement and regional distribution. Progress in these countries, indeed, means progress for the entire world.

The Global Programme is structured to be implemented over three phases, of which we are now in the third.

In Phase I (2016–2019), the Global Programme strengthened critical institutions and systems in selected locations and countries to deliver quality services and opportunities for a significant number of adolescent girls. It aimed to lay the foundations of attitudes, behaviors and norms against child marriage among a critical mass of families and communities.

In Phase II (2020–2023), the Global Programme accelerated actions to end child marriage by

enhancing investments in and support for both unmarried and married adolescent girls; engaging key actors (including young people as agents of change) in catalyzing shifts towards positive gender norms, including the right to choose when and whom to marry; increasing political support, resources, gender-responsive policies and frameworks; engendering respect for laws, including international humanitarian law; and improving data and evidence on what works.

In Phase III (2024–2030), the longer-term, gender-transformative goal is to ensure significantly larger proportions of adolescent girls fully enjoy a childhood free from the risk of marriage. Girls should experience healthier, safer and more empowered life transitions, including making choices about their education, career, sexuality, relationships, marriage and childbearing.





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Results to Date

Below is a selection of programmatic successes achieved in 2023:

- More than **20 million girls** were reached with life skills and comprehensive sexuality education.
- **2.9 million girls** were supported to enroll in, return to, or remain in school.
- **66 million community members** were engaged in dialogues, and consensus-building on gender equality and alternatives to child marriage.
- **94** quality research and evidence products were produced on ending child marriage at country, regional and global levels.
- Global advocacy and technical support have increased the number of governments financing national action plans to end child marriage from 7 in 2018 to **33 in 2023**.
- **904 partnerships** to support social protection and girls' economic empowerment were established.

Zonta International's Impact

Zonta International's commitment to this program is enabling UNICEF and UNFPA to scale up implementation of activities with the following six outcomes, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that girls fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of child marriage:

Outcome 1: Enhanced knowledge, skills and attitudes of marginalized adolescent girls on matters such as their rights, relationships, sexual and reproductive health, and financial literacy, including in humanitarian contexts.

Outcome 2: Adolescent boys, families, traditional and religious leaders, community groups and other influencers demonstrate more gender-equitable attitudes and support for girls' rights.

Outcome 3: Increased capacity of education, health, child protection, and gender-based violence (GBV) systems to deliver coordinated, quality programs and services that meet the needs of adolescent girls and their families, including in humanitarian contexts.

Outcome 4: Increased capacity of national and sub-national social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programs and services to respond to the needs of the poorest adolescent girls and their families, including in humanitarian contexts.

Outcome 5: Enhanced capacity of governments to coordinate and implement national and sub-national action plans and systems to end child marriage.

Outcome 6: Increased capacity of governments and non-government organizations to generate, disseminate and use quality and timely evidence to inform policy and program design, track progress, and document lessons.



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Key Messages

The world must take urgent action to end child marriage! These key messages can help you advocate for girls and raise awareness about child marriage and our partnership.

Child marriage is a violation of girls' rights and a danger to girls' health, safety, education and futures.

- Girls with no education are three times as likely to marry or enter into union by 18 as those with a secondary or higher education.
- Girls who marry as children are less likely to receive medical care during pregnancy than women who marry as adults, which puts their own health and their children's health at risk.
- The vast majority of child brides are expected to give up school to assume adult roles including housework, childcare and attending to a husband's needs.

Changing laws alone will not end child marriage; conditions, attitudes and behavior must also change.

- To change the social and cultural causes of child marriage, and to change attitudes and behaviors, it is essential to engage with families and communities in conjunction with investments in systems that reach girls.
- In times of conflict or other emergencies, child marriage is a danger for adolescent girls.
- During conflict or forced migration, adolescent girls are often married off early as a form of protection in a desperate situation. Other times, it is viewed as a path that financially unburdens the family, preserves its honor and protects an adolescent girl.

Empowering girls with access to quality education, health care, justice, information and tailored services to the individual child and families is key to ending child marriage.

- Life skill-building and empowerment interventions for adolescent girls, when complemented with education, have proven effective at reducing child marriage but are specific to certain contexts, recent research in rural Bangladesh showed.
- Cash transfers have shown results in relieving families' economic burdens and reducing child marriage.

General Facts

- Nearly 640 million women alive today were married as children – before they were 18 years old.
- Globally, the proportion of young women who were married as children decreased from 23 to 19 percent in the last decade, but that means 1 in 5 girls are still married in childhood.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional 10 million girls are at risk of becoming child brides before the end of the decade, child marriages that otherwise might have been averted.

UNICEF USA and Zonta International Partnership

- As a part of the program's Steering Committee, Zonta International is a key partner in the fight against child marriage through the GPEM.
- From 2018-2024, Zonta contributed US\$4.7 million and was the first private partner to commit their support to the program. Zonta International has committed an additional US\$1.5 million to support Phase III of the project from 2024 to 2026.
- Zonta International has supported UNICEF since 1972, and through its [partnership with UNICEF USA](#) has reached millions of women and girls with access to clean water, health care, violence prevention and services, education and more.



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Key Moments

Below are key global moments that can be used to activate your clubs, communities, family and friends around ending child marriage. Use the Social Media Guide and Best Practices for Fundraising in the following sections to help you get started.

August

(or other comparable months around the world)

Congressional Recess

In the U.S., during the month of August, the U.S. Congress typically takes a break (recess!) from their business on Capitol Hill to return to their home districts and/or states. Does your country have a similar month when elected officials return from their capitals? This period is a perfect opportunity to make connections with your local representatives. Throughout a recess, Zonta members are encouraged to coordinate with one another to set up in-district meetings.

October

International Day of the Girl Child (October 11)

The day aims to highlight and address the needs and challenges girls face while promoting girls' empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights.



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November

World Children’s Day (November 20)

The day aims to promote international togetherness, awareness among children worldwide, and improving children’s welfare. November 20 is an important date as it is the date in 1959 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. It is also the date in 1989 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and [Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women](#)

(November 25–December 10) From November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to December 10, Human Rights Day, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign is a time to galvanize action to end violence against women and girls around the world.

[Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women](#) is a Zonta International campaign to raise awareness of and increase actions to end violence against women and girls around the world. The campaign, which

began in November 2012, features the service and advocacy actions of Zonta clubs and districts to prevent and end violence against women and girls in their local communities.

March

International Women’s Day (March 8)

It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political.

Stay up to date on the latest information and news through the UNFPA-UNICEF monthly newsletter.

[Sign up](#) today.

Price Points

Use the Price Points one-pager on the following page as a guide and resource when advocating and fundraising for the Global Programme. Feel free to print it out and share with other members, your community, family and friends to show the potential impact they can make with a donation.

THE IMPACT OF YOUR SUPPORT

We hope you will consider a gift to support The Global Programme to End Child Marriage. Below are examples of the impact your gift could provide:



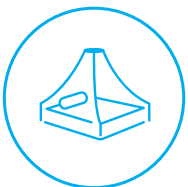
\$55 could provide antenatal care kits to one pregnant adolescent girl in Niger, promoting better health, including preventing anemia and low birth weight of newborns, frequent health threats for girls who are married at a young age and their children.



\$100 could support community facilitators in Ghana to use communication materials to engage 500 people to have improved understanding of issues affecting girls and women.



\$500 could mobilize 50 community members in Mozambique around prevention of child marriage.



\$5,000 could support a Girls Club for a year within a school in Ethiopia. Girls Clubs are making a difference in reducing child marriage by empowering girls through life skills trainings.



\$10,000 could reach over 360 people in India through an awareness campaign on social issues, including child marriage.

\$20,000 could support the transition of 500 girls in Burkina Faso from primary to post primary support through scholarship, school kits and tutoring support. Increasing girls' transition to secondary school is a key strategy for reducing rates of child marriage.

**These figures are exemplary.*

Global Advocacy

The Global Programme continues to work to influence global, regional and national policies and key stakeholders through advocacy, partnerships with influential actors and through the convening of strategic meetings and events.

UNICEF's Stance

UNICEF's stance on child marriage is that marriage before the age of 18 is **a fundamental violation of human rights**. Many factors interact to place a girl at risk of marriage, including poverty, the perception that marriage will provide "protection," family honor, social norms, customary or religious laws that condone the practice, an inadequate legislative framework and the state of a country's civil registration system.

Child marriage often compromises a girl's development by resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, interrupting her schooling, limiting her opportunities for career and vocational advancement and placing her at increased risk of domestic violence. Child marriage also affects boys, but to a lesser degree than girls.

What Is Your Role? A Call to Action

If we redouble our efforts, millions of girls will be saved from becoming child brides. Ending child marriage is within our reach – the time to act is now.

- Learn more about child marriage laws in your country.
- Meet with local officials to speak up about outdated child marriage laws that put your local youth at risk.
- Develop a plan to work with Zontians in your country to advocate for adequate child marriage laws, including through letter writing, meetings or petitions.
- Invite local leaders to events focused on child marriage.

Social Media Guide

Want to raise awareness about child marriage on social media? Use the social media guide below for examples, hashtags and accounts to tag. Make your voice heard!

Hashtag: #EndChildMarriage

X Accounts: @UNICEF, @UNICEF USA, @ZontaIntl, @GPChildMarriage, @UNFPA

Support Countries' X Accounts: @BelgiumMFA, @CanadaDev, @DutchMFA, @ItalyMFA, @NorwayMFA, @FCDOInclusive, @EuropeAid, @StateDept

Facebook Pages: @UNICEF, @UNICEF-USA, @ZontaInternational, @UNFPA

Instagram Accounts: @UNICEF, @UNICEFUSA, @ZontaIntl, @GPChildMarriage, @UNFPA

SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLES

Post 1

- ✓ Working to #EndChildMarriage
- ✓ Supporting girls' education
- ✓ Protecting girls' and women's rights

@ZontaIntl, @UNFPA and @UNICEF are working together to empower women and children worldwide through the Global Programme to #EndChildMarriage ❤️

Learn more at zonta.org.

Post 2

Did you know that child marriage is still legal in the majority of US States today? @ZontaIntl is working to raise awareness of child marriage both domestically and internationally through partnership with @UNICEFUSA and @UNICEF and @UNFPA's Global Programme to End Child Marriage. Learn more about Zonta and UNICEF's work at zonta.org.



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Partner Resources

Along with the information and resources provided throughout this toolkit, we encourage you to use information and resources from partner organizations Girls Not Brides and Unchained At Last. Both organizations provide a breadth of resources on child marriage that can be useful when advocating.

Girls Not Brides

Zonta International and UNICEF USA are both members of Girls Not Brides, which is a global partnership of more than 1,000 civil society organizations from over 95 countries committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential.

Through the [Girls Not Brides Resource Center](#), you can find reports, policy briefs and factsheets about child marriage, as well as capacity building tools for organizations and individuals working to end child marriage.

Unchained At Last

Unchained At Last, a Zonta and UNICEF USA coalition partner, is the only nonprofit in the United States dedicated to helping women and girls leave or avoid arranged/forced marriages and rebuild their lives. Unchained is also the only nonprofit in the U.S. dedicated to creating social, policy and legal change to end forced and child marriage in America.

UNICEF USA and Zonta work closely with Unchained At Last on child marriage. At Last. Visit their website, unchainedatlast.org, for further information and [statistics on child marriage](#).

UNFPA-UNICEF Webpage

Learn more about the [UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage](#) and get the latest information, reports and stories about the progress being made to end child marriage.



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