



Tackling Inequality: Child Marriage at the G7

As the leaders of the G7 nations have recognised, there is still intolerable inequality in today's world, and girls are especially vulnerable. Denied education, at risk of violence and deprived of their freedom, girls – especially those who are married before the age of 18 – need countries to stand up and take action so girls can decide their own futures.

G7 countries have a critical role to play in leading global efforts to empower girls and end child marriage

This year, G7 countries have the opportunity to build on the progress they have made and to show leadership by taking bold, proactive steps to tackle gender inequality.

In the Charlevoix Declaration of 2018, the G7 committed to improving education for girls, particularly in emergencies, and to ending violence against girls. **In 2019, G7 leaders must go further to help deliver a fair and equitable world where girls and young women can thrive.**

Action to end child marriage must be at the centre of efforts to address inequality. The practice is the direct result of unequal societies. When girls are valued less than boys and have little say in whom, and when, they marry, child marriage is rife. Every year, **12 million girls are married before the age of 18 and around 650 million women and girls alive today were married as children.** When a girl becomes a bride, the consequences are lifelong – for the girl, for her family and for her nation. Child marriage is a violation of human rights and denies girls their childhoods and their futures. It perpetuates vicious cycles of poverty, inequality and insecurity which sustain the practice, and is an obstacle to global development.

To address the root causes of inequality, the G7 must also tackle the harmful practices and entrenched unequal social norms that result in child marriage. The voices and decisions of girls and women must be as valued as those of boys and men.

We call on the G7 to:

1. **Recognise** the need for global level action to promote gender equality and to end child marriage, and reflect that within the G7 Final Communique
2. **Develop** concrete solutions for promoting gender equality and ending child marriage that are prioritised for implementation at the national level
3. **Pledge** funding for the implementation of policies and programmes that seek to empower girls, protect them from violence, and that guarantee them access to primary and secondary education



GIRLS NOT BRIDES

The Global Partnership
to End Child Marriage

G7 leadership on ending child marriage will have significant and lifelong implications on girls, their families and their communities.

ECONOMIC: The World Bank estimates the cumulative **costs of child marriage between 2014 and 2030 are above \$5 trillion globally** – money that could instead be spent on tackling the causes of child marriage: gender inequality, schooling for girls and poverty reduction.

EDUCATION: In most cases, child marriage means an end to formal education for girls, as they take on domestic responsibilities as well as childbearing and motherhood. **Education is one of the most powerful tools available to prevent child marriage and promote gender equality.** It provides protection for girls and also provides them with the knowledge and skills to determine their future.

HEALTH: Child brides and their children often suffer a range of harmful health consequences due to early pregnancy. By acting to prevent child marriage, and by improving married and unmarried adolescent girls' access to sexual and reproductive health care, we can **dramatically improve health and broader development outcomes for millions of girls and children worldwide.**

POVERTY: Child marriage is linked to higher household poverty, and perpetuates the cycle of poverty across generations. **When girls have the skills and opportunities to secure a job and develop their skills they can support themselves and their families and break the cycle.**

VIOLENCE: Child marriage is a form of violence against women and girls. Girls who marry as children are at risk of sexual, physical, and psychological violence throughout their lives.

Ending child marriage will accelerate efforts to achieve a safe, healthy and more prosperous future for girls and women around the world

The G7 must show leadership and act now