



GIRLS NOT BRIDES

The Global Partnership
to End Child Marriage

Day of the African Child 2017:

Useful information and suggested advocacy messages for *Girls Not Brides* members

Every year on 16 June, governments, civil society organisations, development partners and others across Africa celebrate the Day of the African Child.

The theme for this year is *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for Children in Africa: Accelerating Protection, Empowerment and Equal Opportunity*. This is an invitation to explore the links between children's rights in the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) – which define global development priorities between now and 2030 – and those in the African Union's Agenda 2063.¹

This information note aims to support *Girls Not Brides* members as they make plans to celebrate Day of the African Child this year. It provides an analysis of the 2017 theme that highlights its relevance for those working to end child marriage, and suggests advocacy messages which *Girls Not Brides* members can use as part of their Day of the African Child celebrations and activities. It also points to other resources which members can use to further inform their work.

Day of the African Child 2017: What is the opportunity?

This year's theme is a reminder of the linkages between the regional and global agendas on development, and the importance of promoting child rights – including by addressing child marriage.

SDG Target 5.3 (*Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations*)² echoes Article 21 of the [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child](#) (which prohibits child marriage and urges governments to establish 18 as the minimum age of marriage).³ [Agenda 2063](#), the African Union's fifty-year vision for the development of the continent, includes a commitment to “mobilise a concerted drive towards immediately ending child marriages, female genital mutilation and other harmful cultural practises that discriminate against women”⁴ All three highlight that ending child marriage is critical to bringing about lasting change in the lives of children across Africa and worldwide.

Day of the African Child in 2017 provides an opportunity for *Girls Not Brides* members working at the local, national and regional levels to start or take part in open, inclusive and informed discussions about the importance for African governments translate their commitments to address child marriage into action.

¹ To find out more about the theme, please read the [concept note](#) by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to guide governments and partners on commemorating the Day of the African Child.

² Target 5.3 is part of SDG Goal 5, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.

³ Article 21 of the Charter states that “Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory.”

⁴ See A paragraph 72.k

Suggested advocacy messages for *Girls Not Brides* members

1. **Without progress on child marriage half of the Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved.** Those goals are those related to: poverty, health, education, nutrition, food security, economic growth, gender inequality, a reduction of other inequalities.⁵
2. SDG Target 5.3 is critical in terms of garnering action and monitoring progress on reducing child marriage globally. **African governments should develop ambitious plans for reaching target 5.3** of the SDGs with clear indicators for progress.
3. **African governments should develop, implement and fund policies, programmes and plans to end child marriage that are comprehensive and cross-sectoral** – i.e. that include efforts to empower girls; to mobilise families and communities; to provide health, education and other services that are tailored to the specific needs of girls; and to establish and implement a robust legal and policy framework that prevents child marriage and supports married girls.⁶ This might involve the development of targeted national strategies and/or integration of child marriage into related strategies for girls and children⁷.
4. **Governments should work closely with a wide range of stakeholders** who all have a role to play in ending child marriage. We will not succeed without the full engagement of civil society, communities, families, traditional and religious leaders, governments, donors, international organisations, boys and girls.
5. Recognising that ending child marriage is a common objective to the SDGs, African Union's Agenda 2063, and international/regional human rights instruments including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, **governments should align their efforts to monitor and report on progress** made at the national level towards ending child marriage.

For greater impact, feel free to adapt these messages to your national context and use them as part of your activities with other *Girls Not Brides* members on the day.

Suggested collective activities for *Girls Not Brides* members

We encourage you to celebrate the Day of the African Child with other *Girls Not Brides* members, including as part of your *Girls Not Brides* National Partnership or national group. Below are some suggested ideas for celebrating the Day.

- Participate in the Day of the African Child celebrations organised at the national or local level, using them as an opportunity to share the above advocacy messages with key decision makers.
- Continue to grow and strengthen the movement by engaging with civil society organisations and networks that have been keeping governments accountable to their commitments on target 5.3 of the SDGs.

⁵ For more detailed analysis of the importance of ending child marriage in ensuring the realisation of the SDGs, the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat has prepared a briefing note for its members entitled [How ending child marriage is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals](#).

⁶ For more information on what constitutes a comprehensive response to child marriage, please refer to *Girls Not Brides'* [Theory of Change](#) on child marriage.

⁷ For learnings from existing national strategies in 11 countries around the world, please refer to *Girls Not Brides'* 2016 report: [Lessons learned from national initiatives to end child marriage](#).

- Collectively prepare joint statements, press briefings and social media messages based on the latest evidence (research, studies or reports) on what it would take to end child marriage including addressing social norm change.
- Influence high level ministerial statements by providing specific recommendations or text to move from commitment to action on addressing child marriage.
- Encourage parliamentarians to take action by enacting or amending legislation, supporting implementation of the SDGs, ensuring sufficient budget is allocated to ending child marriage, and demand governments' accountability to their commitments.⁸

The *Girls Not Brides* secretariat is not in a position to support members' activities.

What the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat will be doing

- **Organising a tweet-chat on progress made to end child marriage across Africa.** We will be looking at the growing number of national initiatives, as well as the inspiring work of civil society. Join us on June 16 at 11 am (GMT) using #GNBchat and #DAC2017. Keep an eye on our [Twitter page](#) for more details!
- **Making the case for addressing child marriage across Africa**, highlighting links with the SDGs and the African Agenda for 2063. Use this [social media toolkit](#) to make the case too.
- **Profiling the collective work of *Girls Not Brides* members on Day of the African Child.** Show us what you are doing! Use the hashtags #DAC2017 and #EndChildMarriage and tag @GirlsNotBrides in your posts.

Useful resources

- *Girls Not Brides*, [How ending child marriage is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals](#), 2016.
- *Girls Not Brides*, [Lessons learned from national initiatives to end child marriage](#), 2016.
- *Girls Not Brides*, [The Role of Parliamentarians in Ending Child Marriage: A toolkit](#), 2016.
- *Girls Not Brides*, [Ending child marriage in Africa, A brief by *Girls Not Brides*](#), 2015.
- *Girls Not Brides*, [A Theory of Change on Child Marriage](#), 2014.
- For further information about child marriage, visit www.GirlsNotBrides.org.
- African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, [Concept note for Day of the African Child 2017](#), 2017.
- United Nations, [The Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), 2016.
- African Union, [The African Union's Agenda 2063](#), 2015.
- African Union, [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child](#), 1990

⁸ For messages on how parliamentarians can take action to end child marriage, please refer to *Girls Not Brides*' toolkit on [The Role of Parliamentarians in Ending Child Marriage](#).