



Recommendations for action against

Child and forced marriages



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

The booklet is based on relevant United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council reports on child, early and forced marriage. It is aimed to provide a summary of compilation of the recommendations contained in these reports.

The recommendations have been clustered under thematic topics in order to help and guide all stakeholders in their implementation.

Recommendations for action against
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Child and forced marriage: a violation of human rights

Every year at least fifteen million girls are married before they reach the age of eighteen that is twenty-eight girls every minute. Child marriage is any formal or informal union or marriage between two people where one or both of the spouses are under the age of 18. Child marriage affects primarily women and girls, although boys can also be affected. Child marriage is a global problem that is not restricted to one country, culture, religion or ethnicity.

International human rights conventions and bodies have acknowledged the need to take measures to address child and forced marriage.

The United Nations recommends a number of practical measures to prevent and eliminate child and forced marriage and also protect women and girls against its adverse impacts.

Several United Nations entities are supporting Member States in taking action against child and forced marriage, in particular UNFPA and UNICEF in the framework of the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to end child marriage, OHCHR, UN Women and WHO.

The present booklet aims to provide an overview of all the recommendations that have been addressed so far in UN reports, for change in legislation, policies and strategies, change in social norms that support discrimination and gender inequality, and also for enhanced accountability and protection, as well as multi sectoral collaboration at local, national, regional and international levels to address child, early and forced marriage.

KEY FACTS

Source: United Nations Population Fund, *Marrying too young, end child marriage*, 2012



15 million

girls before the age of 18 are married every year

1 in 3

girls are married before the age of 18



50 million

girls could still be at risk of being married before their 15th birthday in this decade



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1 in 3

girls will drop out of school due to child marriage

Maternal mortality

is the main cause of death for girls aged between 15-19



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Legislative measures, policies, action plans and coordination mechanisms

Adopt and implement laws, policies and strategies to address the systemic and underlying factors which allow the marriage of children to persist and prevent women from marrying a spouse of their choice.

- A/HRC/26/22

Harmonize national laws on marriage, including by amending existing laws to remove legal obstacles faced by girls who seek the enforcement of national laws on child marriage prevention or prohibition and legal remedies; removing unreasonable legal requirements for formally ending a child marriage; providing access to remedies for those who leave a marriage.

- A/HRC/26/22

Ensure a national legal framework in line with international human rights standards, including with regard to the age of majority and the legal age for marriage for girls and boys, the prohibition of forced marriage and birth and marriage registration.

- A/HRC/26/22

Develop and implement national policies and strategies with the involvement of relevant government departments at the national and local levels, civil society organizations, including women's groups, religious and community leaders, national human rights institutions and other relevant stakeholders such as legislators and the judiciary.

- A/HRC/26/22

Provide adequate financial resources and support comprehensive programmes to address child, early and forced marriage, including those aimed at married girls and those within indigenous and rural communities.

- A/HRC/26/22

Adopt holistic, well-defined, rights-based and locally relevant strategies, that are based on evidence and include legal and policy measures combined with political commitment and accountability at all levels.

- A/71/253

Coordinate national strategies both vertically, including at the local, regional and national levels, and horizontally across sectors such as education, health, justice, social welfare, law enforcement, immigration and asylum.

- A/71/253

Recognize child and forced marriage as a human rights violation and manifestation of gender-based discrimination.

- A/HRC/35/5

Adopt comprehensive measures to address the drivers and causes that expose women and girls to the child and forced marriage, by introducing and enforcing laws and policies that promote equality for women and girls and prohibit violence against them, as well as repealing discriminatory laws, laws that have a discriminatory impact and laws that enable harmful practices.

- A/HRC/35/5





Engagement with community leaders and professional categories

Implement training programmes for government officials, the judiciary, law enforcement and other state officials, teachers, health and other service workers, those working with immigrants and asylum seekers, and relevant professionals and sectors on how to identify girls at risk or actual victims and on applicable legislation and prevention and care measures.

– A/HRC/26/22

Ensure the involvement of older women and of religious and community leaders, and the engagement of men and boys.

– A/HRC/26/22

Adopt comprehensive approaches to ensure the participation of girls and communities.

– A/HRC/27/34

Ensure the active involvement of women, girls and adolescents and civil society organizations in the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies to address child, early and forced marriage for their relevance, sustainable and meaningful impact.

– A/71/253

Recognise and prioritise engagement with other sectors – gender affairs, child protection, education, health, justice – in global, regional and sub-regional responses to child and forced marriages.

– A/HRC/35/5

Develop initiatives with the full and meaningful participation of local communities, including women and girls, religious and traditional leaders, teachers and other “influencers”.

– A/HRC/35/5

Strengthen knowledge of the judiciary of the existing national and international framework to protect girls and women from child and forced marriages, and train them on accountability measures to ensure adequate responses.

– A/HRC/35/5

Build the capacities of all professionals that play a role in preventing child and forced marriages and protecting victims.

– A/HRC/35/5

Education and empowerment of girls

Promote girls' access to high-quality education, including tailored reintegration programmes for girls who are forced to drop out of school owing to marriage and/or childbirth.

– A/HRC/26/22

Ensure the participation of girls, and communities, through comprehensive approaches that address the root causes of child, early and forced marriage, including poverty and gender inequality.

– A/HRC/27/34

Ensure the access of girls to education and services, including information and services on sexual and reproductive health.

– A/HRC/27/34

Invest more in providing access to quality primary and secondary education for girls, including in situations of emergencies and displacement.

– A/HRC/35/5

Provide age-appropriate, culturally relevant and empirically based comprehensive education on sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and life-skills training for women and girls, and ensuring that women and girls are made aware of and have the capacity to claim and exercise their rights in relation to marriage.

– A/HRC/26/22

Provide economic support and incentives to girls attending schools and to their families has proven to be effective in allowing girls to pursue higher education and delay marriage.

– A/HRC/26/22

Promote women's economic empowerment and access to productive resources, including by addressing discriminatory norms and practices in this regard.

– A/HRC/26/22

Enable sociologic and contextually based strategies in which child, early and forced marriage occurs.

– A/71/253

Empower women and girls and promote their human rights, autonomy and choice in all aspects of their lives.

– A/71/253

Ensure women's equal rights to employment.

– A/HRC/35/5

Invest in women and girls as agents of change towards the eradication of child, early and forced marriages and other harmful practices and for the full enjoyment of their fundamental human rights.

– A/HRC/35/5

Ensure greater financing of grassroots initiatives, particularly those amplifying the voice and agency of adolescent girls and young women.

– A/HRC/35/5



Protection and accountability measures

Protection measures should be part of broader efforts to promote equality and eliminate discrimination against women and girls in access to education and in the areas of employment, political participation, health, access to inheritance, land and productive resources.

– A/HRC/26/22

Set up and strengthen independent mechanisms to track progress in addressing child, early and forced marriage and provide redress.

– A/71/253

Strengthen efforts to ensure accountability at the national level, including monitoring and tracking funding for women's rights and child protection.

– A/HRC/35/5

Ensure national human rights institutions have the mandate, resources and capacity to hold states accountable for adequately addressing the practice.

– A/HRC/35/5

Strengthen the role of parliamentarians to monitor the implementation of policies and allocation of resources to eliminate child and forced marriages.

– A/HRC/35/5

Protect civil society space and support engagement of civil society organizations in the area of child and forced marriages.

– A/HRC/35/5

Ensure legal aid for women and girls affected by child and forced marriage.

– A/HRC/35/5

Ensure the availability of adequate, child friendly and gender-sensitive services.

– A/HRC/35/5

Undertake regular, independent and objective assessments of global, regional and national programmes with the women and girls involvement, in order to learning from successes and failures and of documenting good practices.

– A/HRC/35/5

Awareness-raising and change of social norms that support child marriage and gender inequality

Address the widespread cultural and social acceptance of child and forced marriage.

– A/HRC/26/22

Support the establishment of networks to facilitate the exchange of information between girls and young women on child, early and forced marriage through the innovative use of technology.

– A/HRC/26/22

Raise awareness of the harm of child marriage to the victims and the cost to society at large and provide platforms and opportunities for discussion within communities and families on the benefits of delaying marriage and ensuring that girls receive education.

– A/HRC/26/22



Research and data collection

Improve data collection, research and dissemination of existing good practices.
– A/HRC/26/22

Analyse and assess the impact of existing policies and programmes as a means of strengthening them, ensuring their effectiveness and monitoring their implementation.
– A/HRC/26/22

Collect and desegregate data by sex, age, disability, geographical location, socioeconomic status, education level.
– A/HRC/29/L.15

Adopt solid measurement, evaluation and learning, including consistent data collection and disaggregation.
– A/71/253

Prioritize data-collection to monitor the impact of policies and plans, and promote accountability for the implementation of strategies on child and forced marriage.
– A/HRC/35/5

Work with regional and United Nations human rights mechanisms

Continue to collaborate with relevant United Nations entities, regional and sub-regional organizations, and human rights mechanisms, and support member states in developing and implementing strategies and policies at the national, regional and international levels.
– A/71/253

Provide increased support to the work of regional and sub-regional organisations to address child and forced marriages and opportunities to exchange lessons learned and good practices at the regional and sub-regional levels.
– A/HRC/35/5

Establish strong linkages between the work and recommendations of the United Nations human rights architecture, including the Human Rights Council and human rights mechanisms, and the implementation and monitoring of relevant goals and targets of the 2030 SDGs agenda, particularly goal 5.3.
– A/HRC/35/5



UNITED NATIONS REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage (2 April 2014)
- A/HRC/26/22

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights United Nations on Summary report on the panel discussion on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage (18 July 2014)
- A/HRC/27/34

Report for strengthening effort to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage
- A/HRC/29/L.15

Report of the Secretary-General on Child, early and forced marriage (29 July 2016)
- A/71/253

Summary Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Expert workshop on the impact of existing strategies and initiatives to address child, early and forced marriage (March 2017)
- A/HRC/35/5



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