



CALL TO ACTION

Are You Listening?

Cognisant of both the direct and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescent girls and young women worldwide, **we, the undersigned, call for governments to join us in recommitting and accelerating efforts to end the harmful practice of child marriage.** It is apparent, that adolescent girls are facing an increased risk of child marriage due to this pandemic and the subsequent breakdown of existing social networks and economic security. According to UNFPA, this unprecedented global health crisis places the progress we have made to date in delaying marriage for girls at risk and an increase in 13 million more child marriages can be expected due to COVID-19.¹

In [insert country, region] we see this in our work, where [insert impact visible from own work in own national, regional and community context].

We know that adolescent girls are on the front lines of the pandemic response, facing disproportionate burdens of caring for the sick and completing increased domestic workloads. Given the centrality of adolescent girls as caregivers within households and active members of their communities, we urge policymakers to meaningfully engage young girls in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic.² Here, girls need to have a voice in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programmes during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. **It is only when girls are included as part of the solution, that their rights will be upheld and lasting change can be made.**

The role of civil society organizations and youth-led movements in reaching out and supporting these girls cannot be undermined. In order to reach the most vulnerable, grassroots organizations and community-based efforts need to be financially supported through additional flexible funding. **Thus, policymakers need to ensure that these actors have the space and (financial) resources needed to safely reach and support adolescent girls during the pandemic.**

Moreover, we underline the need for [insert any specific additional overarching demands that relate to own national, regional and community context].

More specifically, we call for adolescent girls' meaningful engagement to remain a key priority for three key focus areas, namely, education, gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). **Here, we propose a set of calls to action that contribute to a comprehensive approach towards ending child-marriage and safeguarding girls during the COVID-19 pandemic:**

Education: Recognising that COVID-19 introduces further barriers to girls' schooling and that girls are less likely to return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic, we call for governments to:

- Consider research results examining adolescent girls' vulnerabilities vis-à-vis the pandemic, acknowledge the factors that threaten girls' educational attainment and work toward sensitizing communities to the importance of girl's education being a key priority;³

¹ Between 2020- 2030. Source: [UNFPA, 2020](#).

² See: [More Than Brides \(2020\). Girls and Women on the Front Lines: Bracing for the COVID-19 Response in Low Resource Settings. More Than Brides.](#)

³ See: [Rogers, F. H., & Sabarwal, S. \(2020\). The COVID-19 Pandemic: Shocks to Education and Policy Responses. The World Bank, UNESCO \(2020\). COVID-19 school closures around the world will hit girls hardest. UNESCO.](#)



- Promote a gender-responsive approach to distance learning: amongst others by making use of existing technologies (e.g. radio); taking steps to provide sufficient resources to girls at home

for them to complete their education remotely; and accounting for the flexibilities necessary for adolescent girls to complete schoolwork given their caregiving roles;

- Once in-person schooling commences, ensure that schools are safer and more accessible for adolescent girls by providing free or affordable education, free meals and ensuring access to water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH) facilities and products;
- Ensure that adolescent girls who have undergone child marriage are supported in the process of re-entering the schooling system (e.g. through the provision of catch-up courses) and can go back to school safely without fear of facing stigma or discrimination, given the expected increase in child marriage practices during the pandemic.

More specifically, we urge governments and other key actors in [country and / or region] to:

- [insert call to action relating to regional and national action on education].

Gender-Based Violence: In light of the growing reports that GBV is rising due to the pandemic and restrictive measures taken to tackle COVID-19 (such as the closing of public buildings and the lockdown measures), we urge governments to:

- Encompass and strengthen GBV services as part of essential services which are guaranteed during the pandemic;
- Work together with community-led initiatives and local leaders (such as religious leaders) to encourage and empower community members to speak out against GBV and to report suspected cases of GBV;
- Increase efforts to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and adaptability of GBV support mechanisms such as health, psychosocial and legal means of support;
- Commit to finding new ways to reach adolescent girls at risk of GBV by identifying ways to reach out to them: either via in-person or alternative communication channels (for example radio and social media outreach);
- Invest in identifying and engaging adolescent girls that are particularly vulnerable, such as those living in situations of conflict, displacement and migration.

More specifically, we call on governments and other key actors in [country and / or region] to:

- [insert call to action relating to regional and national action on GBV].

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: The COVID-19 pandemic and government's responses to it have put girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights at risk due to the reprioritization of national healthcare budgets and (human) resources, reduced mobility of girls, and disruptions in supply chains along with health systems, among other factors. Therefore, we call on governments to:

- Continue comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) through gender-sensitive distance learning and to ensure that CSE remains in the curriculum when schools re-open;
- Ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights information, services and products remain essential and accessible, especially to the most vulnerable girls – such as out-of-school or married adolescent girls.

More specifically, we appeal to governments and other key actors in [country and / or region] to:

- [insert call to action relating to regional and national action on SRHR].

By signing this call to action, we as organizations commit to continuing our work on child marriage and urge governments to sign on to this call to action:



By signing this call to action, we as governments take note of the calls above and commit to work against child marriage:

N.B

When using this document please feel free to add to the different open sentences and paragraphs – visible in red- to adapt and personalize this call to action to your goals and context. You are also welcome to adapted specific individual wording that might be sensitive / hindering your lobby and advocacy efforts in your context, according to your target audience. However, please refrain from removing the three key topics of this campaign (education, GBV and SRHR) or the related call to action points- as these are integral components driving this campaign and its vision.

We would love to hear back if you have used this template and see your additions – so please send your adapted version back to us michelle.do.campo@oxfamnovib.nl with some lines on how you've been able to use it, so we can map how this call to action has been applied a tool for change and accountability!