

The 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**Bridging the Gap: From Beijing to 2030 –
End Child Marriage in All Forms**

11th March 2025, 10.00 am – 12.00 noon EST



Labouisse Hall, UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, NY 10017

*Concept Note***Bridging the Gap: From Beijing to 2030 – Ending Child Marriage in All Forms***High-level Side Event at the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women*

Co-hosts: Canada, United Kingdom, Global Programme to End Child Marriage (UNICEF, UNFPA), Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), Girls Not Brides (GNB)

Co-sponsors: Zambia, Dominican Republic, The Netherlands, Girls First Fund (GFF), Zonta International

Event Details:

Date: 10am- 12noon EST, Tuesday, 11th March 2025

Location: Labouisse Hall, UNICEF | 3 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, United States

Background and Context

Since the Beijing Declaration was signed in 1995, significant strides have been made in reducing child marriage globally. In the last 25 years, 68 million child marriages have been prevented, with the global prevalence dropping from nearly one in four young women to one in five within just a decade. Such progress was further reinforced by the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which focuses on gender equality and empowering women and girls, being specially driven by its target 5.3 aims to eliminate harmful practices, including child marriage.

However, child marriage remains a widespread human rights violation and a significant barrier to achieving sustainable development. Alarmingly, we are not on track to end this harmful practice by the 2030 target, and face a growing number of challenges, including the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, persistent poverty, and humanitarian crises, which further exacerbate the vulnerability of girls. Among these various challenges is the rise of informal

unions where children cohabit in arrangements that are not formalized, registered, or recognized by a religious, customary, or State authority.¹

In regions where formal marriage under 18 is strictly banned, such as sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, informal unions can account for up to 80% of child marriages in certain countries.²³ These unions are driven by a complex interplay of factors, including teenage pregnancy, poverty, insecurity, poor education and lack of economic opportunities for young people – which sometimes can also lead to self-initiated decisions to start a union. Conflict-affected and humanitarian contexts have also witnessed a surge in these unions due to displacement, breakdown of social support systems, enhanced poverty and vulnerability, and conflict related sexual violence.

Compared with officially married individuals, girls in informal unions lack legal protection and therefore face greater disadvantages and vulnerabilities. They face higher risks of domestic violence, early pregnancies, economic exploration, including restricted access to essential services like education and health due to lack of recognized status. Furthermore, the clandestine nature of these unions makes them difficult to monitor and address, hindering data collection and accurate estimations of their prevalence.

The 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) in 2025, marking the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+30), presents a unique opportunity to review overall progress in addressing child marriage as a whole, and discuss some of the key challenges, including the rise of informal unions and its implications to the overall progress on ending child marriage. This session follows a renewed momentum generated by the recent UN General Assembly resolution on child marriage, providing a critical platform to foster member states commitment with concrete actions to end child marriage by 2023, as well as to amplify the voices of adolescent girls and civil society to ensure that their experiences inform those actions.

Objectives

- *Assess Progress:* Review the progress made in ending child marriage including informal unions over the 30 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Highlight key achievements, identify persistent challenges, and draw lessons to inform future strategies.

¹ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Third Committee. Resolution on *Child, Early, and Forced Marriage* (A/C.3/79/L.19/REV.1)

² UNICEF. A Profile of Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean.
[Profilepercent20ofpercent20Childpercent20Marriagepercent20inpercent20LAC.pdf](#)

³ UNICEF. (2022). Child Marriage in Eastern and Southern Africa: A Statistical Overview and Reflections on Ending the Practice.
file:///Users/foudingducha/Downloads/Child-Marriage-in-Eastern-and-Southern-Africa-June-2022-UNICEF-web.pdf

- *Financial commitment:* To mobilise action for renewed political and financial commitment from member states and the international community to eliminate CEFMU by 2030.
- *Catalyze collective Action:* Harness the momentum of Beijing+30 to strengthen collaboration renew commitments across partners and accelerate action among Member States and partners. Prioritize steps to drive local-level solutions informed by evidence, cross-sector partnerships, and accountability mechanisms across Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia where the global burden remains an issue.
- *Champion Girls' Voices:* Prioritize the voices of adolescent girls, especially those at risk of or affected by child marriage. Ensure their meaningful involvement in advocacy and policymaking, empowering them to influence the outcomes of Beijing+30 review and broader initiatives aimed at ending child marriage.

Expected Outcomes

- *Actionable solutions:* Identification of innovative and localized strategies and scalable practices based on evidence on what works to prevent and respond to child marriage in the bid to end the practice by 2030.
- *Renewed commitments:* Strengthening actionable priorities by member states and bilateral partners for addressing CEFM,
- *Collaborative Partnerships:* Fostering multi-stakeholder coalitions/ collective impact to accelerate progress towards SDG 5.3.

Key Messages

- With just five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must urgently accelerate efforts to end child marriage in all its forms, including by tackling the challenges posed by informal unions. This requires stronger, more comprehensive legal and policy frameworks to ensure that no girl is left behind.
- By strengthening financial commitments and fostering meaningful partnerships, we can accelerate progress and ensure that every girl has the opportunity to determine her own future. Governments, donors, and philanthropic partners need to be more strategic/innovative with funding to drive evidence-based policies and scalable solutions.
- A multi-sectoral, rights-based approach is essential to tackling the structural drivers of child marriage—poverty, gender inequality, and gaps in education,



healthcare, and child protection. Civil society organizations must be recognized not just as implementers but as strategic partners in shaping policies, driving accountability, and amplifying girls' voices in decision-making.

Format and Participation

A two-hour interactive session convened by the Government of Canada, UK, Zambia, Dominican Republic and the Netherlands, UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), Girls Not Brides, Girls First Fund and Zonta International. The event will feature select Member States with diverse thought leaders, child marriage survivors, creatives, women's and youth advocates from civil society organizations.