



Advocating for Grandmothers, Vulnerable Children and Youth in Africa  
Soutien aux grands-mères, enfants et jeunes vulnérables en Afrique

## **Policy Statement**

### **Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM)**

#### **GRAN's Position on the Issue**

- GRAN agrees that Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) is a human rights violation, and has devastating consequences to women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa and around the world. Child marriage, defined as a formal marriage or informal union before age 18, is a reality for both boys and girls, although girls are disproportionately the most affected. It perpetuates gender inequality and powerlessness that is a barrier to girls developing their full potential and contributing fully to their society. It exposes them to health risks, abuse and violence.
- GRAN agrees that supporting girls so they are able to avoid CEFM and stay in school, translates into greater opportunities for them to develop new skills and generate income, building an economic base that will help lift present and future generations out of poverty.
- GRAN supports girls' rights to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.
- GRAN calls for concerted action at all levels and all sectors of society for the prevention and elimination of CEFM.
- GRAN acknowledges the following human rights instruments that are relevant to CEFM:
  - UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
  - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
  - UN General Assembly Resolution on child, early and forced marriage adopted December 18, 2014
  - UN Human Rights Council Resolution on Strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage, adopted July 2, 2015
  - UN Sustainable Development Goals

Signatories to such conventions must ensure that commitments are implemented and enforced at the national level.

### **What is the scope of our work?**

- To continue to raise awareness of the global prevalence of CEFM and its devastating consequences.
- To promote a comprehensive approach to ending CEFM that links gender equality, quality education, healthcare and sexual and reproductive health and rights with community development and national and international laws.
- To engage with and encourage the Canadian Government in its announced foreign policy and development priority to end CEFM.
- To advocate that all girls and women of all ages are healthy, educated, safe and empowered.

### **What actions will GRAN take?**

- Raise the profile of the issue through our networks at all levels: local, national, and global.
- Collaborate with partners (formal or informal) who share our commitment to work to eliminate and prevent CEFM.
- Create a campaign of support for ending CEFM through social media, letters/opinion pieces, letters to key leaders, and by meeting with Canadian Members of Parliament and Ministers who can influence this issue nationally and globally.
- Advocate for Canadian government and global organizations' support for policies and programs that will help implement SDG Goal 5.3 to end CEFM by 2030.
- Advocate for continued and increased Canadian funding to ensure the effective implementation of national strategies to reach the SDG Target 5.3 to eliminate CEFM by 2030, and for grassroots organisations working on child marriage.
- Advocate globally for increased and continued funding to address the causes of CEFM.
- Advocate for solutions to prevent child marriage in conflict, and humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters like earthquakes and droughts, and support girls who are married in these situations.

### **Indicators of success achieved so far:**

- A resolution of the UN General Assembly to end CEFM was adopted on November 21, 2014.
- A resolution of the UN Human Rights Council on CEFM was adopted on July 2, 2015
- Target number 5.3 included Global Goals for Sustainable Development calls on countries to end child, early and forced marriage by the year 2030.
- In 2014 the African Union launched a campaign to end CEFM in Africa and has extended it to run until at least 2017.

- An increasing number of countries have recognised the need to move from a project-based approach to child marriage towards the development of comprehensive, national strategies.

**Other indicators of success:**

- Social norms that legitimize CEFM change through education and understanding of the harm to women, girls and communities.
- New global development funding to end CEFM is announced.
- The number of girls in school and staying in school increases.
- The rates of CEFM decrease globally