



Government
of Malawi

Together, we can build a Malawi where girls are free

and able to reach their full potential.
Let us all join hands, raise our voices
and take action against Child Marriage.

In partnership with

**We all have a
role to play.**

unicef 
for every child



ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN MALAWI: A CALL TO ACTION

Concerned that the prevalence of Child Marriage in Malawi, at 42 per cent, is one of the highest in the Sub-Saharan Africa; and that cases of child marriage continue to rise despite the various interventions on the ground. If unabated, Child Marriage inflicts significant socio-economic and political cost for Malawi and derails the nation's developmental aspirations.

Recognizing that Child Marriage is one of the most serious and pervasive forms of abuse against women and girls and that it perpetuates women's and girls' unequal status in society and violates a broad range of human rights particularly their sexual and reproductive rights and the right to determine when and whom to marry. In addition to affecting the physical and mental well-being of the child, Child Marriage contributes to higher level of maternal mortality and pregnancy related complications affecting both the mother and the child.

Early Child Marriage has significant impact on girls' realisation and prosperity in life. Child Marriage is identified as one of the key causes for girls' drop-out of school, significantly lowering their prospects for continuous education and future engagement in economy and thus have direct negative implications to potential economic growth by reducing women's expected earnings in adulthood by as much as 15.6 per cent.

Acknowledging that girls in Malawi continue to experience the consequences of early pregnancy including morbidity, school dropout, discrimination; harmful social practices and norms and that programs continue to face funding challenges to adequately implement interventions to fully safeguard children from child marriage; and that tangible steps need to be taken in order to end Child Marriage in Malawi.

Reaffirming that Child Marriage is not only a social evil but also a crime and a human rights violation which elicits a continuum of damages that have long term effects on the lives of girls and the overall socio-economic development of Malawi. **Investment in preventing Child Marriage is a smart economics approach** that supports Malawi's vision of achieving an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant economy by 2063 along with the implementation of key SDGs goals of universal primary education, maternal and child health and gender equality.

Also **building on** the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage (2018 – 2023) and the urgent need to take bold and meaningful steps to stop Child Marriage, we unanimously call for following urgent actions to

be taken by government line Ministries, civil society organizations, private partners, faith-based institutions, development partners, donors, and all likeminded stakeholders to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of children, especially girls by:

- 1 Facilitating positive change in cultural norms, attitudes, behavior, beliefs and practices that support and promote Child Marriage.
- 2 Increasing public investments to End Child Marriage, with priority on:
 - Maintaining continuous access to quality education and health services, including comprehensive sexuality education and sexual reproductive health and rights services for girls and boys;
 - Accelerating poverty alleviation and livelihoods support programmes; and,
 - Strengthening case management and victim support.
- 3 Fostering an enabling policy and legal framework which is fully enforced to end Child Marriage.
- 4 Strengthening joint planning, information sharing and monitoring to maximize results of actions combating Child Marriage by reinforcing participation and the work of various sectors, thematic working groups and coordination networks.
- 5 Putting in place mechanisms for protecting girls from Child Marriage during humanitarian crises such as pandemics and natural disasters.
- 6 Supporting Government efforts with additional financing taking into account the limited fiscal space.
- 7 Enhancing transparency and accountability on Child Marriage investments by sharing plans and budgets to maximize smart investment by stakeholders and ensure adequate funding for priority programmes.
- 8 Enhancing service provision for survivors of Child Marriage including access to justice services.
- 9 Engaging male champions to condemn Child Marriage and eradicate the malpractice.