



For its first observance, this year's Day will focus on child marriage, which is a fundamental human rights violation and impacts all aspects of a girl's life. Child marriage denies a girl of her childhood, disrupts her education, limits her opportunities, increases her risk to be a victim of violence and abuse, jeopardizes her health and therefore constitutes an obstacle to the achievement of nearly every Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and the development of healthy communities.

Globally, around one in three young women aged 20-24 years were first married before they reached age 18. One third of them entered into marriage before they turned 15. Child marriage results in early and unwanted pregnancies, posing life-threatening risks for girls. In developing countries, 90 per cent of births to adolescents aged 15-19 are to married girls, and pregnancy-related complications are the leading cause of death for girls in this age group.

Girls with low levels of schooling are more likely to be married early, and child marriage has been shown to virtually end a girl's education. Conversely, girls with secondary schooling are up to six times less likely to marry as children, making education one of the best strategies for protecting girls and combating child marriage.

Preventing child marriage will protect girls' rights and help reduce their risks of violence, early pregnancy, HIV infection, and maternal death and disability, including obstetric fistula. When girls are able to stay in school and avoid being married early, they can build a foundation for a better life for themselves and their families and participate in the progress of their nations.

Activities and [events](#) to mark the Day are organized by [UNFPA](#) , [UNICEF](#) , [UN Women](#) .

Additional links:

[International Day of the Girl Child](#) (UN webpage)

[Secretary-General's message](#)

On December 19, 2011, United Nations General Assembly adopted [Resolution 66/170](#) to declare October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child, to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world.