

The Elders to turn spotlight on neglected issue of child marriage
Press Conference, New York, 20 September 2011

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MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson and Dr Gro Brundtland will draw global attention to the neglected issue of child marriage during the United Nations General Assembly week in New York, 19-23 September.

Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage, initiated by The Elders, will be presented on the world stage for the first time at a **press conference** at the **Clinton Global Initiative in New York on Tuesday 20 September**. The Elders will also speak at a number of other events (see below).

Each year, an estimated 10 million girls are married worldwide before the age of 18. That's more than 25,000 girls a day who are robbed of their rights and their childhood. Child brides usually drop out of school. Their health is put at risk - girls under 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their 20s.

Dr Gro Brundtland, former Norwegian Prime Minister and former Director-General of the World Health Organization said:

“Child brides are among the most vulnerable, invisible and isolated people on our planet. Marrying so young, with no choice in the matter, is a gross violation of a girl's basic human rights, and is also a major challenge to development. If world leaders meeting in New York want to make real progress on global human rights, health, education and the fight against poverty, they cannot ignore child marriage.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair of The Elders, said:

“Child marriage is not a religious practice; it is a tradition that occurs in communities around the world. There are many good traditions that bind communities together. But traditions are also not static – they evolve. We can choose to change traditions that are harmful.”

Girls Not Brides, a new global partnership to end child marriage, brings together dozens of international NGOs and grassroots organisations from every corner of the

world. *Girls Not Brides* will give greater visibility and leadership to the issue of child marriage and strengthen efforts to end it at local, national and global levels.

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said:

“At current rates, 100 million girls will be married in the coming decade. By ending child marriage we can empower these girls to fulfill their potential and help to transform their communities on an unprecedented scale. By mobilising global attention and more resources, we believe that change can take place in a single generation.”

The Elders’ speaking engagements in New York include:

- **[The Clinton Global Initiative:](#)**
 - Press Conference with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson and *Girls Not Brides* partners (11:45 am, Tuesday 20 September, [accreditation required](#)).
 - Plenary session with Archbishop Desmond Tutu (9:00 am, Wednesday 21 September).
 - ‘Addressing Child Marriage’ with Mary Robinson and Dr Gro Brundtland (10:30 am, Thursday 22 September).
- **[‘Every Woman Every Child’:](#)** Reception hosted by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson and Dr Gro Brundtland (20 September).
- **[The Social Good Summit:](#)** ‘We are stronger together: the transformative power of human connection’ with Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Mary Robinson of The Elders (3:30 pm, 21 September).
- **MDG Countdown 2011:** ‘Celebrating Successes and Innovations’, a DFID/USAID event with Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Mary Robinson (4pm, 21 September).

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NEW WEBSITE www.GirlsNotBrides.org, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)

WATCH NEW VIDEO [on child marriage, narrated by Desmond Tutu, Graça Machel and Mary Robinson](#)

PHOTOS available on [Flickr](#)

About The Elders

The Elders is an independent group of global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007, who work together for peace and human rights.

The Elders are Martti Ahtisaari, Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu (Chair). Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi are honorary Elders.

For biographies of the Elders, blogs, photos, videos and more information about their work please go to www.theElders.org.

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