

The Elders welcome new moves in Africa to end child marriage

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders today welcomed recent moves by leaders in The Gambia, Tanzania and Uganda to end or curb child marriage, as part of the African Union's continent-wide campaign to eradicate the harmful practice.

In The Gambia, where almost a third of underage girls are married, President Yayha Jammeh has announced that anyone marrying a girl below 18 would be jailed for up to 20 years, with legislation due to be drawn up in the coming months. In Tanzania, meanwhile, parliament has declared that current child marriage laws are unconstitutional.

The Ugandan health ministry has also recently announced that it will provide more advice to girls and adolescents, and educate them on their sexual and reproductive health and rights, joining 10 other countries which have already adopted national strategies and action plans to end child marriage.

[Kofi Annan](#), Chair of The Elders, said:

"It is encouraging to see more African leaders and legislators taking action to end the damaging and abusive practice of child marriage. This is an issue of rights, health, justice and protection that affects individual girls and women, their families and their wider community. Governments across the continent must now work hard to educate the wider population and eradicate this practice once and for all."

The Elders have campaigned against child marriage since 2011, when they formed the global civil society alliance [Girls Not Brides](#), now an independent organisation in its own right.

[Mary Robinson](#) added:

"As Elders, we are committed to promoting equality for women and girls and ending all forms of discrimination. Child marriage is cruel and harmful. It denies girls the chance of an education and economic independence. Their talents cannot then be tapped by communities which could

benefit from their knowledge and resilience. These latest steps are welcome but much more still needs to be done to protect girls' rights."

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About The Elders

The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Kofi Annan](#) (Chair), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#) (Deputy Chair), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

[Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) are Honorary Elders.

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

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