



GIRLS NOT BRIDES

The Global Partnership
to End Child Marriage

Terms of reference

Consultant to research the role of religious leaders in efforts to end child marriage

January 2018

About *Girls Not Brides*

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of more than 800 civil society organisations committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential. To ensure that the Partnership operates as a strong global network, the collective work of *Girls Not Brides* members is supported by a secretariat based in London, UK.

Background

Child marriage happens across different religions as well as among non-religious communities. It is not associated with one particular religion and is caused by many factors. Yet with almost 80% of the world population who professes a religious belief, as spiritual guides, religious leaders have the potential to help end century-old practices such as child marriage.

Across Africa, South Asia, and the Middle-East, hundreds of civil society organisations who are members of *Girls Not Brides*, have been engaging with religious leaders - i.e. individuals who are seen as an authority within a particular religion - in their efforts to end child marriage.

Some leaders have taken action to address child marriage and have been powerful agents of change. Others have strongly opposed actions to end the practice, sometimes in a context of rising fundamentalism, using arguments based on religion to justify laws and policies that threaten women and girls.

In 2017, *Girls Not Brides* gathered [insights from practitioners](#) and compiled [useful resources](#) on this topic. However, we found very few tools to support organisations in overcoming obstacles created by conservative leaders who oppose efforts to end child marriage.

Girls Not Brides is seeking an experienced consultant to start filling this gap, and develop products to support *Girls Not Brides* members in overcoming challenges related to engaging religious leaders in their work on child marriage. Given the complexity of various religious discourses and landscapes among each religion practiced across the world, this assignment will focus on one of the three major religions in the top 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage: Christianity, Hinduism and Islam.

This assignment is part of [Girls Not Brides' 2018 online learning series](#), which encourage *Girls Not Brides* members to explore one approach to end child marriage every month. Engaging religious leaders will be the focus topic for May. Ahead of this, the consultant will be asked to develop the two products described in this terms of reference, and to facilitate an online discussion with *Girls Not Brides* members about the early findings from these products. The final products will then be launched at *Girls Not Brides'* Global Meeting – a global conference gathering hundreds of civil society organisations and development partners – in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 25 to 27 June 2018.

Overview of the assignment

The main objective of this assignment is to produce two products (see below), to support *Girls Not Brides* members in overcoming challenges related to some religious leaders opposing efforts to end child marriage, hence helping them reinforce their work on this issue.

Product 1: a background report gathering evidence on what has worked and what hasn't worked to address challenges in working with religious leaders (to inform the development of a practical tool).

Product 2: a practical tool on how to overcome challenges related to engaging religious leaders in efforts to end child marriage (to be discussed and refined together with *Girls Not Brides*).

Primary audience: *Girls Not Brides* members who engage religious leaders in their initiatives on child marriage but face challenges in getting them to take action to end the practice, and would thus like to reinforce their strategies.

Secondary audience:

- *Girls Not Brides* members who have faced strong oppositions to actions to end the practice, sometimes in a context of rising fundamentalism.
- *Girls Not Brides* members who are not yet working with religious leaders yet but would like to start engaging them in their efforts to end child marriage.
- Other development actors in one of the two situations mentioned above

Reporting to the *Girls Not Brides* secretariat based in London, the consultant will be asked to:

1. Carry out **desk research to map evidence** on strategies that have either:
 - Led to progress on child marriage or other child protection or gender related issues (*e.g. HIV, female genital cutting/mutilation, family planning etc.*), despite strong opposition by religious leaders.
 - Led to religious leaders changing their position on child marriage or other child protection or gender related issues (*i.e. leaders that used to be against efforts to end child marriage and became supporters taking action to end the practice*).
 2. Conduct **interviews with experts** and gather their experience with religious leaders in their work to end child marriage (*i.e. if, and if so how, to engage them and how to overcome potential challenges*).
 3. Use the desk research and interviews to produce a background report. This report should analyse **strategies to overcome oppositions from religious leaders** from one of the three major religions in the top 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage: Christianity, Hinduism or Islam. It should:
 - Identify **attitudes and practices that are commonly associated with religious beliefs and hold back progress on child marriage** (*e.g. religious powers blocking legislative reforms to raise the minimum age of marriage; religious leaders performing child marriage and promoting the practice in their communities; communities believing that religion promotes chastity before marriage and marrying girls early to preserve this; communities believing that child marriage is condoned by religion etc.*)
 - Draw lessons learned from **initiatives that successfully engaged religious leaders** in areas where religious beliefs and/or religious leadership used to condone child marriage or other child protection or gender related issues (*e.g. female genital mutilation/cutting, lack of access to education, sexual and reproductive health education and service, including contraception etc.*)
 - Draw lessons learned from **initiatives that have failed to foster change** where religious beliefs and/or religious leadership were supporting child marriage or related practices.
 - Explore what **approaches** were adopted at different stages of programme development and implementation (*e.g. when are religious leaders being engaged for the first time, what is the level of engagement etc.*). Explore what religious and non-religious **arguments** were used.
2. Develop a **practical tool to support *Girls Not Brides* members in overcoming challenges** related to some leaders opposing efforts to end child marriage, hence helping them reinforce their work on this issue. The

tool should focus on how to address attitudes and practices that are commonly associated with religious beliefs and hold back progress on child marriage

Support provided

The *Girls Not Brides* secretariat will support throughout the consultancy by providing:

- Introduction to some key informants as needed and possible.
- Sharing some resources on child marriage & religion.
- Providing guidance on key questions that would be useful to ask informants.
- Regular check-in calls to discuss progress of the project and any support needed.
- Feedback and input into the consultant's different drafts of the report.

Deliverables

- A background report – first draft expected at the end of March
- A practical guide/tool for *Girls Not Brides* member – first draft expected at the end of March
- Facilitation of a session to validate early findings of the report/tool (via webinar) – early May
- Facilitation of a session to present the tool to *Girls Not Brides* members and partners at the *Girls Not Brides* Global Meeting, which will take place in Malaysia in June 2018 including a PowerPoint presentation explaining how to use the tool.

Qualifications

- Research experience, particularly in relation to the influence of religion on health and/or human rights.
- Background in religious studies or proven understanding of at least one of the key religions of interest to *Girls Not Brides* members (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism).
- Background and experience in working on gender, women's rights and/or child marriage, or related sectoral approaches (sexual and reproductive health rights, gender-based violence, female genital cutting/mutilation, HIV, etc.).
- Proven experience in conducting qualitative research with a range of different stakeholders including religious scholars and authorities and civil society in developing contexts.
- Extensive knowledge of and experience in designing and undertaking qualitative research and scoping reports.
- Experience developing practical tools / guidance to support practitioners in their work.
- Excellent written and spoken English; able to produce a concise and high quality research report.
- Knowledge of another language is desirable (e.g. French, Arabic).
- Ability to work independently and remotely.

How to apply

Qualified candidates should contact Julie Rialet: julie.rialet@girlsnotbrides.org with the subject line "consultant to research the role of religious leaders in ending child marriage" before 15 February with:

- A short introduction stating why they are suited to deliver this project
- A CV
- A 2 to 4 page proposal highlighting how they understand the assignment and how they intend to accomplish it (methodology, publications to review, individuals to interview, tasks etc.)
- Estimated fee for the consultancy (daily rate), estimated number of days and proposed timeline
- Any links to relevant products developed by the consultant

Short-listed proposals will be contacted for further discussion.