

United Nations Says 'Let Girls Be Girls' on International Day of the Girl



United Nations, October 11 (RHC)-- A girl under the age of 15 marries somewhere in the world every seven seconds on average, according to data provided by the organization Save the Children.

The disturbing figure is part of a study entitled "Every Last Girl: Free to live, free to learn, free from harm," which was published Tuesday to mark the International Day of the Girl.

The report estimates the global population of girls at 1.1 billion, roughly the equivalent of India's population or one in every six people alive in the world today. Save the Children ranked each country by the vulnerability of girls to exploitation and abuse, asserting that in some countries, girls as young as ten are forced into marriages.

Some of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries in the world – Chad, Niger, Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia – are ranked at the bottom of the index.

"Child marriage starts a cycle of disadvantage that denies girls the opportunity to learn, develop and be children. They fall pregnant and are exposed to STIs (sexually transmitted infections) including HIV." said

Save the Children President & CEO Carolyn Miles.

Miles also says that girls who are forced to marry often can't attend school and are more likely to face domestic violence, abuse and rape. Although the international community tried to address these issues in the last round of the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goals, the 2015 benchmarks proved too ambitious and fell well short of the mark.

The international community has pledged to end child marriage as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which began last year. But international organizations have said that if current trends continue, the total number of women married in childhood will actually grow from more than 700 million today to around 950 million by 2030, and to 1.2 billion by 2050.

Outcomes such as these rob children of their youth, the U.N. said, and they challenged the international community to "let girls be girls."

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