



Save the Children

MAKE IT 18

RAISING THE MINIMUM AGE OF MARRIAGE IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Why this issue matters

Child, early and forced marriage violates children's rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and undermines access to education, health and protection.

In Solomon Islands child marriage is still legal, exposing girls to early marriage, lost education opportunities, early pregnancy and increased risks of violence. These are compounded by poverty, limited access to essential services and climate impacts particularly in rural and customary contexts.

Scale and impact of child marriage

- 21% of girls in Solomon Islands marry before the age of 18
- 6% of girls marry before the age of 15
- 4% of boys marry before the age of 18
- Prevalence is significantly higher in rural areas (24.7%) compared to urban areas (11.5%)

UPR commitments and government action

During the 38th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (3rd Cycle), Solomon Islands received and supported recommendations to raise the minimum legal age of marriage to 18 years, including:

- 104.134 (Italy)
- 104.146 (Marshall Islands)
- 104.148 (Mexico)
- 104.151 (Netherlands)
- 104.152 (Chile)

Since the last review, the Government has:

- Initiated a review of the Islanders' Marriage Act 1945 (from 2022), with a stated intention to amend Section 10
- Implemented awareness programmes to reduce child, early and forced marriage
- Endorsed the National Children's Policy 2023–2028, which includes actions aimed at increasing the minimum legal age of marriage
- Pledged "By December 2026 Solomon Islands will raise the legal age of marriage from 15-18" at the First Ministerial Conference for the Elimination of Violence Against Children (EVAC) in 2024, (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs).

Consultations and evidence base

In preparation for the fourth UPR cycle, the Government of Solomon Islands conducted consultations through inter-ministerial processes to inform its National Report. In parallel, Save the Children Solomon Islands, between 2023 and 2025, led extensive consultations with children and young people, caregivers and parents, community, faith leaders and civil society.

Conducted across three provinces in Solomon Islands: Guadalcanal, Malaita and Western Province these consultations confirmed strong community acceptance for raising the minimum age of marriage to 18.

Legal and implementation gaps

Despite acceptance of UPR recommendations, legislative reform remains incomplete:

- Section 10 of the Islanders' Marriage Act 1945 still permits marriage from 15 years of age
- Customary marriages are allowed without a minimum age
- Exceptions linked to parental consent and customary practices continue to legalise child marriage
- Enforcement remains weak, particularly in rural and customary settings

Child Brides under existing marriage laws

There are three types of legal marriage in Solomon Islands, civil, religious and customary marriage.

- The Act sets the legal age of civil and religious marriages at 18 years but 15–17-year-olds can marry, with their father's permission or judicial consent in the absence of a father or guardian
- There is no legal requirement under the Act to provide birth certificates when marrying. Birth registration challenges and loopholes in Solomon Islands continues to perpetuate this cycle
- The Constitution of Solomon Islands recognises customary law has effect as part of the law of Solomon Islands
- Under customary law, there is no minimum age for marriage. According to traditional custom, marriages are often arranged by parents with a bride price negotiated and paid to the girl's family, which can make girls more vulnerable to child marriage
- There is no legal requirement to register customary marriages. Lack of customary marriage registration can limit access to lawful rights and entitlements, on separation, divorce or if they are widowed

Key recommendations to Government of Solomon Islands

Civil society urges the Government to:

- Amend the Islanders' Marriage Act and all related legislation: establish 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage, without exception, including for customary marriages, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Strengthen prevention and enforcement mechanisms, including:
 - Universal birth registration
 - Mandatory proof of age for marriage
 - Clear accountability for officials and others who facilitate unlawful marriages
 - Increased penalties for the facilitation of child marriage
- Adopt and implement a coordinated national approach to eliminate child marriage by:
 - Combining legal reform with community-based awareness programmes
 - Engaging parents, community leaders and young people
 - Protecting girls' access to education
 - Increasing child protection services
 - Establishing clear referral and reporting pathways for breaches of the law



Find out more:

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