



[www.girlsrights.org](http://www.girlsrights.org)

## CHILD MARRIAGE

### STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- One in seven girls in developing countries is married before age 15, and 38 percent are married before age 18. They often marry men much older than they are.
- Girls who marry early usually drop out of school and often live far from their families.
- Serious medical consequences for pregnancies that result from early marriage are: obstetric fistula, low birth for the child and sometimes even death for the mother and /or child

1. Changing Attitudes: Addressing attitudes and customs that promote or condone the practice of child marriage is vital to change. Communication campaigns help to create circumstances in which traditional attitudes can be discussed and examined on the local level.<sup>1</sup> Girls, themselves, are becoming more articulate about choosing what they want such as education, to stay in school longer, to marry later and with whom they wish, and to take part in decision making which involves their lives.

Examples: <http://www.unicefusa.org/campaigns/public-policy-advocacy/child-marriage.html>

UNICEF addresses the practice or early or forced marriage by working with governments to change and enforce laws. More importantly, UNICEF works directly with communities and families, to help them change their own views. By focusing on positive messages and using local leaders, UNICEF is convincing entire communities to abandon the practice of child marriage.

<http://www.care.org/campaigns/childmarriage/index.asp> In Ethiopia, community organizations, parents, and tribal and religious leaders have already mobilized to amend the law to outlaw child marriage

2. Prevention: **Cash transfer** programs are directed to girls, keeping them in school: Yemen, Brazil, Turkey, Mexico, Jamaica, Haiti, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Uganda, Peru,<sup>2</sup>

**Education** is key -<http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/341/facts.html>

- Girls with a secondary education are up to six times less likely to marry young compared to girls with little or no education.
- Education delays the age at which a girl or young woman marries.

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<sup>1</sup> *Child Protection Information Sheet, Child Marriage*, UNICEF

<sup>2</sup> *Investing in Girls*, Zimmerman, Tosh, Holmes, (Global Assets Project), Oct. 2

- Education provides an alternative opportunity for girls other than marriage.
  - Education increases socio-economic status and learning potential for girls
3. Laws and Policy: Although the minimum legal age for marriage in most countries is 18, the implementation of these laws is often ignored in favor of common practice, consideration of short term economic needs, and what is seen as the “physical protection of the girl”, particularly in conflict areas.<sup>3</sup>  
Recognition and punishment of men who kidnap girls can avoid forced marriage. Law enforcement and court official trainings promote this avoidance of forced marriage.
  4. Resources:  
Plan International, *Because I am a Girl* (annual publications)  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/10/opinion/kristof-girls-just-want-to-go-to-school.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/10/opinion/kristof-girls-just-want-to-go-to-school.html?_r=0)  
<http://www.roomtoread.org/page.aspx?pid=183&ender>  
UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young, End Child Marriage* (2012)  
Coalition for Adolescent Girls, *Girls Count* series
  5. Monitoring and Evaluation – Birth Registration is essential to prevention of child marriage, since it confirms a girl’s age and thus it is more difficult to circumvent federal and state laws.
  6. Gender Inequality: are key determinants of health status. “each year approximately 16 million adolescent girls give birth, the majority of which occur in developing countries. Pregnancy and childbirth related complications are the number one killers of girls aged 16-19.”<sup>4</sup>
  7. Role of men and boys: One example: Sisters of Notre Dame in Patna, India are beginning a program for adolescents in the schools which will work at changing prevailing perceptions of *customs* which do violence to girls.
  8. Regional Framework – Africa, Asia, Central America:  
[http://www.iwhc.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3487&Itemid=629](http://www.iwhc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3487&Itemid=629)
  9. UN Roles - Use of the two Conventions, CEDAW (*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Woman*) and CRC (*Convention on the Rights of the Child*) provide excellent opportunities to expose harmful practices such as early or forced marriage

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<sup>3</sup> Women and Children’s Rights: Making the Connection, *Eliminating Child Marriage*

<sup>4</sup> Fact Sheet, International Year of Youth

