



August 29, 2013

Dear Friends,

Every day, thousands of girls are forced to leave their family to marry before they are physically, emotionally, and socially prepared. Forced into marriage against their will, they endure physical and sexual abuse. They become mothers while they are still children.

The reality facing child brides, many of them living in rural communities is startling:

- One in three girls is likely to be married before the age of 18. Estimates show that nearly 5 million girls are married under the age of 15 every year!
- Child brides often forced out of school, and as a result, have limited economic opportunity to lift their lives out of poverty.
- Children born to girl brides are 60 percent more likely to die by their first birthday than children with mothers over the age of 19
- Girls under the age of 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their twenties.

Child marriage is driven by poverty, deeply embedded cultural traditions, and beliefs about controlling sexuality of girls. Often ignored or accepted as normal, child marriage is a violation of human rights. It's effects are harmful not only to girls, but to their families, communities and countries.

Is your organization taking action on child marriage? Write to us and share some of your challenges as well as your success!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

(Fact Sheet) Child Marriage Fact Sheet

(Interactive Map) Ford Foundation - Child Marriage Interactive Map

(Guidelines) Plan International - A Girl's Right to Say No to Marriage

(Action Agenda) United National Population Council - Ending Child Marriage

(Website) Girls Not Brides - How Can We End Child Marriage?

(Call for Outline Research Proposals) Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women

(Accepting Applications) Gates Foundation - Grand Challenges in Global Health

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

What is the child marriage in your country?
Are young girls being married off at age 12, 14, 16?

Fact Sheet: The attached Child Marriage Fact Sheet provides an overview about child marriage, including a brief synopsis of the legal age of marriage in many countries. You may be surprised to learn that many countries marriage below the age of 18 is legal, with the consent of parents. **(SEE PAGE 6)**

Interactive Map: The Ford Foundation website provides a visual picture of the countries where there is early marriage. It also shows patterns around early birth, maternal mortality, and level of secondary school enrollment for girls. To view the interactive map visit: <http://bit.ly/17ZYfFl>

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Ending child marriage can only happen if there is a concerted effort to transform policy as well as the beliefs and cultural practices that perpetuate it. It will only happen when we stand up to protect and support girls to have the same rights and opportunity afforded to boys. In your work, your organization can be part of the solution:

1. Invest equally in girls and boys: Review your programs, do you extend support, services and opportunity equally to girls and boys. If not, examine the underlying causes of those differences. One of the most important ways you can make a difference for girls is to ensure that they are enrolled in school, especially in secondary school. But it is not enough to get them in school, look at how they are treated at home and at school - that often affects their ability to succeed. But education is often not enough: girls need safe spaces to discuss the challenges they face, gain self confidence, and benefit from the support of others. They need access to contraceptives to prevent pregnancy. In addition, they need skills to earn an income - this can often make a critical difference to whether they are forced into early marriage.

2. Challenge Social and Cultural Norms: Social and cultural norms are perpetuated by culture and tradition. If those are not changed, the practice of child marriage is not likely to change. Are there parents who support their girls in school? Can they serve as positive role models for other parents in your community? Engage parents, local leaders, and the wider community. Build alliances with traditional leaders, religious leaders, and other members of the community that command respect and influence to speak up and act against child marriage.

3. Advocate for Policy Change: Is there a network in your country that is advocating for

changing the legal age of marriage? Find out and lend your voice to their action. You don't have to lead the charge, but you can put your name and voice toward the effort. The

Guidelines: Plan International has a report on child marriage titled "A Girl's Right to Say No to Marriage: Working to End Child Marriage and Keep Girls in School." The report's executive summary provides an overview of the issues related to child marriage. It also provides a list of 10 actions that you can take to end child marriage. To download the executive summary (or the full report) in English, French, or Spanish, visit: <http://bit.ly/19MzJsv>

Action Agenda: United National Population Council has a book on ending child marriage. In Chapter 6, "Giving Girls a Chance: An Agenda for Action," they detail out some of the actions that can be taken and provide examples of efforts in a few countries. They also remind us to provide support to those girls who are already married, they are in an extremely vulnerable situation and can benefit from programs of support. To read the chapter, visit: <http://bit.ly/14KnFKe>

Website: Girls Not Brides is a global partnership formed to mobilize international action to stop child marriage. It provides information on strategies to end child marriage. It also provides profiles of organizations that are part of the Girls Not Brides global partnership and the action they are taking. Visit the website here: <http://bit.ly/15VDNtq>

(Call for Outline Research Proposals) Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women

The UK's Department for International Development (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development), The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (www.hewlett.org), and Canada's International Development Research Centre announce the launch of the jointly-funded research initiative Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW).

This GrOW program aims to generate new evidence on women's economic empowerment, gender equality, and growth in low-income countries. The program will address key evidence gaps by generating and synthesizing rigorous empirical research. It will also stimulate innovative partnerships and ways of working to ensure that robust evidence helps shape policies and programs to deliver better development outcomes for women, economies, and societies more broadly. The program will bring together leading researchers from around the world to work collaboratively in addressing critical knowledge gaps.

With a focus on low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the program will produce high-quality evidence on three sets of inter-related questions:

1. What are the nature and magnitude of barriers to women's economic

empowerment and to closing gender gaps in earnings and productivity? How can these barriers be overcome?

2. How do specific patterns of economic growth and types of structural change affect women's economic empowerment and gender equality?
3. How do women's economic empowerment and gender equality affect economic growth?

Themes 1 and 2 will be explored through innovative new research projects, developed through a competitive call for Outline Proposals, launched on July 25, 2013. Theme 3 will be addressed through a series of commissioned papers (Evidence Synthesis) analyzing the best-available evidence. A separate call on this theme will be launched soon.

For an overview of this program, please read the GrOW brochure.
For more information, read the Call for Outline Research Proposals (PDF)

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read a background paper by Naila Kabeer, as well as two IDRC literature reviews: Women's Economic Empowerment and Economic Growth, and Women and the Care Economy.

Deadline to apply is October 25, 2013 at 4:59 EDT (Ottawa time). To apply, complete and submit the online application: <http://bit.ly/1bbElqt>

Have questions? Refer to the frequently asked questions about GrOW (PDF), or email contactgrow@idrc.ca

(Accepting Applications) Gates Foundation - Grand Challenges in Global Health

One bold idea. That's all it takes.

Unorthodox thinking is essential to overcoming the most persistent challenges in global health. Vaccines were first developed over 200 years ago because revolutionary thinkers took an entirely new approach to preventing disease. Grand Challenges Explorations fosters innovation in global health research. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has committed \$100 million to encourage scientists worldwide to expand the pipeline of ideas to fight our greatest health challenges. Launched in 2008, more than 850 Grand Challenge Explorations grants have been awarded to innovative, early-stage projects in more than 50 countries. Browse the program's latest annual report here.

Open to All Disciplines: Anyone Can Apply

The grant program is open to anyone from any discipline, from student to tenured professor, and from any organization – colleges and universities, government

laboratories, research institutions, non-profit organizations and for-profit companies.

Agile, Accelerated Grant-Making

The initiative uses an agile, accelerated grant-making process with short two-page applications and no preliminary data required. Applications are submitted online, and winning grants are chosen approximately 4 months from the submission deadline. Initial grants of \$100,000 are awarded two times a year. Successful projects have the opportunity to receive a follow-on grant of up to \$1 million.

Grand Challenges Explorations Round 12 is now open and applications will be accepted until November 12, 2013 at 11:30 a.m. Pacific Standard Time. For application instructions visit: <http://bit.ly/1aG31xq>

Welcome to our new subscribers this week!

Abaana Rural Outreach Foundation, Uganda
Concern for Women and Children Development Initiative (WIDEK), Tanzania
Kgotso Development Trust, Zimbabwe

As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash/>.

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org.

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Child Marriage Factsheet

What do we mean by child marriage?

Child marriage, defined as marriage before age 18, is a violation of human rights, compromising the development of girls and often resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, with little education and poor vocational training reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty. Most child marriages are also forced marriages, where the consent of the child is not considered before the consummation of the union. While boys are affected by child marriage, the issue impacts girls in far larger numbers and with more intensity.ⁱ

Why is child marriage practiced?

- **Economic reasons:** Girls are either seen as an economic burden or valued as capital for their exchange value in terms of goods, money or livestock.
- **Control over sexuality:** Child marriage is often regarded as necessary for controlling girls' sexuality which is directly linked to family honor and status.
- **Custom and tradition:** Where child marriage is prevalent there is strong social pressure on families to either conform or face ridicule, disapproval or family shame. Local perceptions regarding an ideal age of marriage are tied to economic factors such as dowries, bride price, et cetera.
- **Security:** In many cases parents turn to child marriages in order to secure a future for their daughters. Situations of insecurity and acute poverty can prompt parents to resort to child marriage as a protective mechanism or survival strategy.

What is the prevalence of child marriage?

The prevalence of child marriage varies across region and nation. According to the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 51 million girls between the ages of 15-19 are currently married; 100 million girls will be married before eighteen within the next decade.

What are the consequences of child marriage?

Health

The majority of young brides have limited access to contraception and reproductive health services and information. They are exposed to early and frequent sexual relations and to repeated pregnancies and childbirth before they are physically mature and psychologically ready. Obstetric fistula is one of the most devastating consequences, affecting over two million girls and young women. Pregnancy related deaths are the leading cause of mortality in 15-19 year old girls, and girls age 15 years or under are five times more likely to die than those over 20.ⁱⁱ

Education

According to the ICRW, education is the strongest predictor of marriage age. For example, in Mozambique approximately 60% of girls with no education are married by 18, compared to 10% of girls with secondary schooling and less than 1% of girls with higher education.ⁱⁱⁱ Human rights research shows that the greatest obstacles to girls' education – as identified in many government reports to human rights monitoring bodies – are child marriage, pregnancy and domestic chores.^{iv}

Poverty

In many countries child marriage is linked with poverty. This is because it affects particularly the poorest in the population, and helps to reinforce cycles of poverty. Child wives tend to have more children and fewer independent income options. Poverty ultimately fuels child marriage, which in turn perpetuates the feminization of poverty. This situation is also supported by country economic indicators for measuring the health of the economy: several countries with very low gross domestic products (GDPs) tend to have higher rates of child marriage.^v

Domestic Violence

Child brides are often more likely to experience domestic violence and less likely to take action against this abuse. Girls who marry early are also more likely to believe that a man is justified in beating his wife.^{vi}

Which international treaties refer to child marriage?

Article 1 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines the child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years.” In addition, Article 16(2) of the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) states that the “betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.” In its general recommendation no. 4 on adolescent health and development, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the body responsible for monitoring state compliance with the CRC, has found early marriage to be a harmful traditional practice that negatively affects girls’ sexual and reproductive health. The CRC requires states to take all measures to abolish such traditional practices (Article 24(3)) and to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Article 34).

What is the minimum age of marriage (for girls) laws from around the world?

See tables below, broken down by region. Exceptions noted in second column. (Research conducted summer 2010.)

AFRICA

18 years or above	Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria (18 in 18 states), Rwanda, Seychelles
18 or above with exceptions	Angola (15 based on physical development), Congo (Republic of) (18 but younger with permission from court), Eritrea (18 but 16 if pregnant), Ghana (18 but varies under customary law), Madagascar (18 but 14 with parental consent and court order), Malawi (18 but 15 with consent), Mauritius (16 with parental consent), Mozambique (18 but 16 with consent), Senegal (18 but 16 with consent (13-16 with court order)), Somalia (18 but 16 with consent), South Africa (21 but 15 with parental consent), Swaziland (21 but 16 with consent), Tunisia (20 but 17 with consent), Uganda (18 but 16 with consent), Zambia (21 but 16 with parental consent)
Below 18	Burkina Faso (17 but 15 with court waiver), Cameroon (15), Chad (13), Democratic Republic of Congo (15), Equatorial Guinea (none), Gabon (15), Gambia (none), Guinea (17), Guinea-Bissau (17), Lesotho (none), Mali (15), Niger (15), Sierra Leone (none under customary law, 21 but younger with consent under Christian marriage act), Sudan (16), Tanzania (15, 14 with court order, 12 under customary/religious law), Togo (17), Tunisia (17), Zimbabwe (16)

ASIA

18 years or above	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Iraq, Mongolia, Oman, Singapore, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Vietnam
18 or above with exceptions	India (18 except under Mohammedan Law), Iraq (18 but 16 with consent), Japan (20 but 16 with parental consent), Jordan (18 but 15 with civil court consent), Kazakhstan (18 but 16 with court permission), Kyrgyzstan (18 but can be lowered to 17), Laos (18 but 15 under special circumstances), Malaysia (18 but 16 with court order: non-Muslims), Maldives (18 with exceptions), Myanmar (20 but 14 with consent), Nepal (18 but 16 with consent), Philippines (21 years but 18 with consent for non-Muslims), Russia (18 but 16 with parental consent), Sri Lanka (18 but not for Muslims)
Below 18	Armenia (17), Azerbaijan (17), Bahrain (15), Brunei (14), Indonesia (16), Iran (13), Israel (17 but 14 with parental consent), N. Korea (17), S. Korea (16), Kuwait (15), Lebanon (depends on religion), Malaysia (16 but under 16 with court consent: Muslims), Pakistan (16), Papua New Guinea (16 but 14 under special circumstances), Qatar (16), Saudi Arabia (none), Syria (17 but 13 with judicial consent), Thailand (17 but 13 with parental consent), Turkmenistan (16), Uzbekistan (17 but 16 under special circumstances), Yemen (None)

EUROPE

18 years or above	Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia,
18 or above with exceptions	Albania (18 but lower in case of pregnancy), Austria (18 but 16 with consent), Belarus (18 but 15 under special circumstances), Bulgaria (18 but 16 with court order), Bosnia (18 but 16 with court order), Croatia (18 but 16 with court order), Cyprus (18 years but younger with parental consent), Czech republic (18 years but 17 with parental consent), Denmark (18 but lower with consent of High Commissioner), Estonia (18 but 16 with parental consent), Georgia (18 but 16 with consent), Greece (18 but younger with court order), Hungary (18 but 16 with parental consent), Iceland (18 but younger with court order), Italy (18 but 16 with parental consent), Latvia (18 but 16 with consent), Liechtenstein (18 but younger with parental consent), Malta (18 but 16 with parental consent), Montenegro (18 or lower with courts consent), Netherlands (18 except in case of pregnancy), Norway (18 but younger with permission of authorities), Poland (18 but 16 with permission from the court), Portugal (18 but 16 in special circumstances), San Marino (18 but 16 in special circumstances), Serbia (18 but 16 with permission of court), Slovenia (18 but 15 with consent), Spain (18 but 14 with court permission), Sweden (18 but below with permit), UK (18 but 16 with parental consent)
Below 18	Andorra (16), Armenia (17), Azerbaijan (17 but 16 under special circumstances), Luxembourg, 16 but lower with parental consent), Macedonia (16), Moldova (16), Monaco (15), Romania (16 and 15 in special circumstances), Switzerland (17), Turkey (17 but lower with consent), Ukraine (17)

LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

18 years or above	El Salvador, Honduras
18 or above with exceptions	Anguilla (18 but under with consent), Antigua and Barbuda (18 but 15 with consent), Brazil (21 but 16 with consent), Bahamas (18 but lower with permission), Belize (18 but 16 with consent), Bermuda (18 but 16 with consent), Cayman Islands (18 but lower with consent), Colombia (18 years but 12 with consent), Cuba (18 but 14 with consent), Dominican Republic (18 but 15 with consent), Ecuador (18 but earlier in special circumstances), Grenada (21 but lower with consent), Guatemala (18 but 14 with consent), Jamaica (18 but 16 with consent), Nicaragua (18 but 14 with consent), Panama (18 but 14 with consent), Saint Lucia (18 but 16 with consent), Trinidad and Tobago (18 but 12 with consent), Venezuela (18 but 14 with consent)
Below 18	Argentina (16), Barbados (16), Bolivia (14), Chile (16), Costa Rica (15), Dominica (16), Guyana(16), Haiti (15), Mexico (Varies by State –ranges from 14-16), Paraguay(16), Peru(16), Suriname(15), Uruguay (12)

NORTH AMERICA AND PACIFIC REGION

18 years or above	New Zealand
18 or above with exceptions	Australia (18 but 16 with courts approval), Canada (varies in provinces, 18, 19, 16 with consent), Fiji (21 but 16 with consent), Samoa (19 but 16 with consent), United States
Below 18	Vanuatu (16), Solomon Islands (15)

ⁱ UNICEF Early Marriage – A Harmful Traditional Practice 2005 p.1

ⁱⁱ IPPF and UNICEF - 'Ending Child Marriage - A Guide for Global Policy Action' p.11

ⁱⁱⁱ ICRW 'Too Young to Wed' 2006 p.3

^{iv} IPPF & UNICEF –'Ending Child Marriage - A Guide for Global Policy Action' p.13

^v IPPF & UNICEF –'Ending Child Marriage - A Guide for Global Policy Action' p.15

^{vi} ICRW – Too Young to Wed, 2003p.1