

Solutions to End Child Marriage

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE



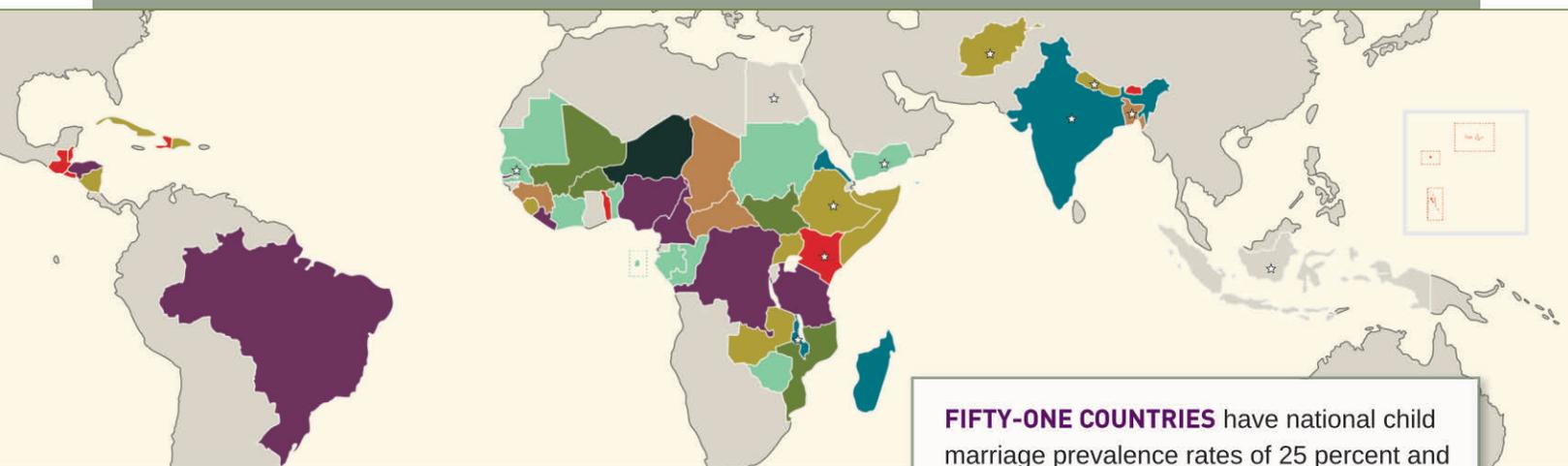
Today, there are nearly 70 million

child brides worldwide. With marriage, a girl's childhood abruptly ends. Her health and future prospects immediately fall in jeopardy. Tens of millions of girls in the developing world are at risk of being forced to wed as part of this deeply entrenched practice that significantly impedes progress on human rights, education, global health and economic development.

Fortunately, there are ways to make a difference.

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) conducted a systematic review of programs that measured a change in knowledge, attitudes and/or behaviors related to child marriage. Twenty-three of more than 150 programs with a child marriage component had been evaluated, offering important insights into what can be done to end the practice. From these evaluations, ICRW identified five programmatic strategies used to delay or prevent child marriage.

CHILD MARRIAGE PREVALENCE* AND EVALUATED PROGRAMS**



- 70+ %:** NIGER
- 61-70%:** BANGLADESH, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, CHAD, GUINEA
- 51-60%:** BURKINA FASO, MALI, MOZAMBIQUE, SOUTH SUDAN
- 46-50%:** ERITREA, INDIA, MADAGASCAR, MALAWI
- 40-45%:** AFGHANISTAN, CUBA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, ETHIOPIA, NEPAL, NICARAGUA, SIERRA LEONE, SOMALIA, UGANDA, ZAMBIA
- 36-39%:** BRAZIL, CAMEROON, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, GAMBIA, HONDURAS, LIBERIA, NIGERIA, TANZANIA
- 31-35%:** BENIN, CONGO, COTE D'IVOIRE, GABON, MAURITANIA, SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE, SENEGAL, SUDAN, YEMEN, ZIMBABWE
- 25-30%:** BELIZE, BHUTAN, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, HAITI, KENYA, MARSHALL ISLANDS, NAURU, TOGO, VANUATU

FIFTY-ONE COUNTRIES have national child marriage prevalence rates of 25 percent and higher. However, only 11 countries—indicated by a star on the map—had evaluated child marriage programs: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Senegal and Yemen. Collectively, these programs have reached only a tiny fraction of the tens of millions of girls at risk for child marriage.

* The percentage of women ages 20 to 24 years old who were married before age 18. (Source: UNICEF (2013). State of the World's Children 2013. New York, NY.)

** Using available data in 2011.

Solutions to End Child Marriage

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE

THE FIVE STRATEGIES:



Empower girls with information, skills and support networks

By bringing girls together to learn basic skills like literacy and numeracy, how to communicate and negotiate with others, how to stay healthy during their reproductive years, how to work together to solve problems, and how to earn and manage money, girls can become more knowledgeable and self-confident. Also, meeting peers and mentors helps alleviate the social and economic isolation many girls in developing countries experience. Taken together, these gains enable girls to advocate for themselves, make better decisions and aspire to alternatives to early marriage.



Provide economic support and incentives to girls and their families

Parents may benefit financially from marrying their daughters off early, either through gaining a bride price, lowering the price of the required dowry or simply having one less mouth to feed. Approaches that enhance the economic security of poor households can aid in curbing child marriage. Providing a girl or her family with an incentive, such as a loan, or an opportunity to learn an income-generating skill, can yield immediate economic relief for struggling families. Daughters who learn skills that enable them to earn an income in the future may be seen as adding more value to the family.



Educate and rally parents and community members

Families and community elders are traditionally responsible for deciding when and whom a girl marries. Educating them—through meetings, information campaigns and/or public announcements—about how child marriage impacts a girl's health and future often sparks powerful change. With new knowledge, adults' attitudes and behaviors about child marriage can shift; they become more likely to challenge, rather than embrace, traditional expectations of girls.



Enhance girls' access to a high-quality education

Girls with no education are three times as likely to marry before 18 as those with secondary or higher education. Providing incentives—such as uniforms or scholarships—or the necessary skills and support for girls to enroll and remain in school can help delay marriage. When girls are in school, they are less likely to be seen as ready for marriage by their families and community members. Programs aimed at improving the safety and girl-friendliness of schools, strengthening school curricula and making school lessons relevant to girls' lives also are effective. School allows girls to develop supportive social networks as well as the skills and knowledge to better advocate for themselves—and their futures.



Encourage supportive laws and policies

Many countries with high rates of child marriage have passed legislation to prohibit the practice or have established a legal minimum age for marriage. Advocating for the implementation of such laws, and raising awareness among government officials and community leaders and members, helps strengthen and/or better enforce existing initiatives around girls' rights. Where legislation is not on the books, advocating for legal and policy reform is a critical first step.

EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PROGRAMS

ETHIOPIA

BERHANE HEWAN

ORGANIZATIONS: Ethiopian government, Population Council, UNFPA, UN Foundation, Nike Foundation

STRATEGIES: Berhane Hewan targets married and unmarried girls ages 10 to 19 in Ethiopia's Amhara region. It also engages girls' families as well as the broader community. The program's strategies to prevent child marriage and to support married girls include forming girls' groups, providing school materials to keep girls in school, holding community conversations about child marriage, and enlisting adult mentors to support girls. Berhane Hewan also awarded families with a goat or sheep for keeping daughters in the program.



RESULTS FROM PILOT

(2004-2006): Ten to 14-year-old girls in project village were 90 percent less likely to be married than girls in comparable control village. Berhane Hewan is ongoing and is now being scaled up in other parts of Ethiopia.

(Sources: <http://www.gutmacher.org/pubs/journals/3500609.pdf>; http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/2010PGY_BerhaneHewanReport.pdf)

Most common strategy combination among evaluated programs:



EGYPT

ISHRAQ

ORGANIZATIONS: Save the Children, Caritas, CEDPA, Population Council, Ministry of Youth, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood

STRATEGIES: Ishraq is a two-year program for girls ages 12 to 15 who are not in school. It aims to help them return to the classroom by teaching literacy and numeracy, health and life skills. The program also provides financial education and sports programming. Ishraq engages community members through group education sessions about consequences of and alternatives to child marriage.



RESULTS (2001-2004):

Ishraq girls expressed a desire to wait until they are older to marry and to have a say in choosing a husband. The more exposure they had to the program, the bigger the impact was. For example, the percentage of girls who said they preferred to get married when they are younger than 18 decreased with program exposure: from 35 to 15 percent among girls who participated for less than 12 months; from 28 to 5 percent among those involved for 13 to 29 months; and from 26 to 1 percent among girls in the program for the full 30 months. Ishraq is ongoing.

(Source: <http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/IshraqFullReport.pdf> http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/2013PGY_IshraqFinalReport.pdf)

INDIA

MAHARASHTRA LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM

ORGANIZATIONS: Institute for Health Management-Pachod, ICRW, Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation

STRATEGIES: This program convened groups of unmarried adolescent girls for one hour each weekday over a year. They learned about reproductive and sexual health, effective communication and decision-making skills, among other topics. The program also educated community members about reproductive health and causes and consequences of child marriage, and mobilized adults to support girls.



RESULTS (1998-1999):

Girls' median age at marriage increased from 16 to 17 in the program area, compared to no change in the control area. Decision-makers in young married girls' lives became more supportive and knowledgeable of girls' reproductive health needs. Girls at risk of child marriage became more confident and gained skills to negotiate with their parents. The Maharashtra program is ongoing.

(Source: <http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/Improving-the-Reproductive-Health-of-Married-and-Unmarried-Youth-in-India.pdf>)

SENEGAL

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

ORGANIZATIONS: Tostan, Center for Research in Human Development, Population Council, UNICEF, Macro International Inc.

STRATEGIES: This program targeted mostly women with informal education sessions around hygiene, problem solving, women's health and human rights. It also mobilized village leaders and community members to stand up against harmful practices, such as female genital cutting and child marriage.



RESULTS (1996-2000):

Several villages made public declarations to end child marriage. Women who participated in the program and were exposed to community mobilization activities—as well as those who were only exposed to community activities—reported that they were more knowledgeable about their rights. The program is ongoing.

(Source: http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_59605.html)

To read more download the full *Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows* report at: www.icrw.org

The next generation of development programs must make ending child marriage a priority. Investments should take into account successful programmatic strategies, such as those identified by ICRW, while continuing to test innovative approaches and evaluation techniques. No single strategy, however, will offer the antidote to child marriage. Indeed, a combination of strategies, designed to fit the local context, will likely be most successful in transforming behaviors, attitudes and social norms.

Moving forward, there also must be more investment in documenting and evaluating what works to end child marriage. A body of successful programs now exists to expand on, but much more work is required across geographic settings and communities. Further, the 23 evaluated programs took place in only 11 countries, and did not cover many of the locations where child marriage prevalence rates are highest. It is imperative that future programs are anchored in countries, regions and communities where child marriage is widespread. They must build on what is known, while analyzing the key factors driving child marriage in each specific location. Programs then need to tailor their objectives to address those factors among community members and within systems.

It is critical that these efforts do not overlook girls who are already married.

They are among the most marginalized members of society and need special attention in development programs and planning. Married girls, and their peers at risk of early marriage, must be at the center of programs. Families, community leaders and the broader community are also essential to helping change norms and expectations about what is possible for girls and women.

Finally, programs that are promoting other development goals, such as improving access to education, reducing vulnerability to HIV, improving maternal and child health, and promoting food security, can and should address child marriage in order to achieve long-term success. Indeed, ICRW's review found that many promising strategies that had an impact on preventing child marriage were part of programs with broader development goals.

Strategies to end child marriage



Empower girls with information, skills and support networks



Educate and rally parents and community members



Enhance girls' access to a high-quality education



Provide economic support and incentives to girls and their families



Encourage supportive laws and policies

A committed, inclusive approach to addressing child marriage will contribute significantly to not only creating a world where girls are free to decide if, when and whom to marry, but also one where girls and women are safer, healthier, valued and empowered.



Headquarters
1120 20th St. N.W.
Suite 500 North
Washington, D.C. 20036
Phone: 202-797-0007
Fax: 202-797-0020
E-mail: info@icrw.org
Web: www.icrw.org

Asia Regional Office
C – 139 Defence Colony
New Delhi – 110024 India
Phone : 91-11-2465-4216
Fax : 91-11-2463-5142
E-mail: info.india@icrw.org

East Africa Regional Office
ABC Place
Waiyaki Way, Westlands
P.O. Box 20792, 00100 GPO
Nairobi, Kenya
Phone: 254.20.2632012



London, U.K.
Email: info@GirlsNotBrides.org
Web: www.GirlsNotBrides.org