Child marriage in humanitarian crises

Girls Not Brides has developed a brief and an infographic on child marriage in humanitarian crises. What do we know? What is being done to address it? What more should we do?

Download the brief

Download the infographic
Child marriage in humanitarian crises: key facts

• #DidYouKnow? 8 out of the 10 countries with the highest #childmarriage rates are considered fragile states. #EndChildMarriage

• Humanitarian crises exacerbate poverty, insecurity & lack of access to education, which all drive #childmarriage. #EndChildMarriage

• In times of crises, families see #childmarriage as a way to cope with poverty or protect their daughters from violence. #EndChildMarriage

• We’re not doing enough to prevent #childmarriage & protect adolescent girls during humanitarian crises. #EndChildMarriage

• More research is needed to understand crises’ impact on #childmarriage, but that shouldn’t be an excuse for inaction! #EndChildMarriage
Child marriage in humanitarian crises: key facts

Conflict
• #DidYouKnow? #Childmarriage is sometimes used as a weapon of war by armed groups http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD
• In war-torn Somalia, girls were abducted & forced to marry fighters of the armed group al-Shabaab. http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD #EndChildMarriage

Displacement
• Breakdown of social networks & risk of violence during displacement make girls more vulnerable to #childmarriage http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD
• In northern #Cameroon, girls in internally displaced & refugee camps are at a higher risk of #childmarriage http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD

Natural disasters
• Natural disasters threaten girls’ access to education, adding to their vulnerability to #childmarriage http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD
• In #Bangladesh, floods have pushed families to adopt #childmarriage as a survival strategy http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD #EndChildMarriage
Child marriage in humanitarian crises: key facts

• How can we protect girls from #childmarriage during crises? @GirlsNotBrides members make recommendations http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD

• We need to recognise #childmarriage as a critical issue both in crises AND in times of stability. http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD #EndChildMarriage

• We must involve girls from the beginning of a crisis to identify their needs & protect them from #childmarriage. http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD

• Preventing #childmarriage & helping married girls should be part of any humanitarian response – not an afterthought. http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD

• To #endchildmarriage in conflict: improve girls’ safety, meet families’ basic needs & provide education http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD

• Gathering more data & research about how different crises affect adolescent girls is key to #endchildmarriage! http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD
Introduction
Growing evidence shows that in times of humanitarian crisis, child marriage rates increase, with a disproportionate impact on girls. Yet adolescent girls continue to be left behind in humanitarian response efforts. This brief outlines what we know about child marriage in humanitarian crises, highlights a number of initiatives which address it, and includes recommendations on what more needs to be done. It has been informed by the experience of a number of Girls Not Brides members working on this issue. It should be read with this brief: raising action to address child marriage: the role of different actors, conflict and humanitarian crisis, which included indicators for tracking progress.

Four key messages are worth emphasizing:
- Eight out of the ten countries with the highest child marriage rates are considered fragile states. We cannot ignore child marriage in such contexts.
- Child marriage rates have increased in some crisis situations. While gender inequality is a root cause of child marriage in both stable and fragile contexts, often in times of crisis, families see child marriage as a way to cope with economic hardship exacerbated by crisis and to protect girls from increased violence. But in reality, it results in a range of harmful consequences.
- Child marriage is not being adequately addressed in situations of crisis. It is a cross-cutting issue which requires coordinated action across all sectors from the earliest stages of crises.
- More research is needed to understand how different types of crises affect child marriage, how programmes which tackle child marriage can be adapted for these settings, and how child marriage can be integrated into humanitarian response efforts. However, research must support interventions to address child marriage, and the need for more research should not be used as an excuse for inaction.

What do we know about child marriage in humanitarian crises?

- Humanitarian crises can encompass a wide range of situations before, during, and after natural disasters, conflicts, and pandemics. They exacerbate poverty, inequality, and lack of access to education, factors which drive child marriage.
- For poor families who have lost livelihoods, land and homes because of a crisis, marrying their daughter may seem like the only option to alleviate economic hardship by reducing the number of mouths to feed or in some places receiving a bride price.
- Families living in crisis-affected contexts often anticipate a rise in violence and see marriage as a solution to protect girls from sexual violence, despite the fact that married girls face.

1 See Girls Not Brides’ fact sheet on child marriage in humanitarian crises.
3 According to the World Health Organization (2015), a crisis refers to “an intermediate stage of an ongoing crisis, representing a critical threat to the health, safety, or wellbeing of a community, usually over a wide area. Armed conflicts, epidemics, family, natural disasters, environmental disasters, and other large-scale adverse events may overlap or contribute to a humanitarian crisis.”
5 In some communities, the groom’s family has to pay a certain amount of money to the bride’s family. A Girls Not Brides member working in Middle East and Asia reported that the bride price is critical in parents’ decision to marry off their daughters in Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea.

For Twitter:
- What do we know about #childmarriage in humanitarian crises? How can we address it? New brief by @GirlsNotBrides: http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD

For Facebook:
Growing evidence shows that child marriage increases in times of crises. Yet adolescent girls continue to be left out of humanitarian responses. This needs to change!

Read @GirlsNotBrides’ latest brief and recommendations on tackling child marriage in fragile contexts: http://bit.ly/1TRnYZD

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Share our infographic!

For Twitter
- We cannot ignore #childmarriage during humanitarian crises! Let’s do more to protect girls. RT if you agree! [Attach infographic]
- We must do more to protect girls from #childmarriage during humanitarian crises! New infographic by @GirlsNotBrides [Attach infographic]

For Facebook
When a crisis hits, adolescent girls become much more vulnerable to child marriage. Yet they are all too often left behind in humanitarian efforts. It’s time to do more!

Check out @GirlsNotBrides’ infographic on child marriage in crises: [Attach infographic]
Additional resources

**Syrian refugee crisis**
- Blog: [Child marriage and the Syrian conflict: 7 things you need to know](#)
- Girl’s story: “*We could not protect her so we had to marry her*”

**Natural disasters**
- Blog: [The roving shelters improving girls’ lives in post-earthquake Nepal](#)
- Video: [Crisis in the Sahel: adolescent girls face child marriage in Mali, Niger](#)
- Girl’s story: [Salma’s story, Pakistan](#)

**Displacement**
- Blog: “*Wait for the matoke to ripen*: child marriage in Uganda

*More stories on our website: [Conflict and humanitarian crises](#).*

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