

Child Marriage and EDUCATION

Child marriage is associated with lower levels of schooling for girls in every region of the world and is a barrier to international development goals.¹ 🌱 A lost opportunity for education is not only harmful for girls, but has wide-reaching repercussions for their children and communities. 🌱 Educating girls creates many positive outcomes for economic development and poverty reduction by improving a girl's income-earning potential and socio-economic status.



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CHILD MARRIAGE IMPEDES GIRLS' EDUCATION

The education a girl receives is the strongest predictor of the age she will marry, according to ICRW analysis in 18 of the 20 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage.^{2,3} The chart shows regions of the developing world and the percentage of girls who marry by 18 by their years of schooling.^{4,5} In all regions, girls with higher levels of schooling are less likely to marry as children. In particular, girls with secondary schooling are up to six times less likely to marry as children when compared to girls who have little or no education.

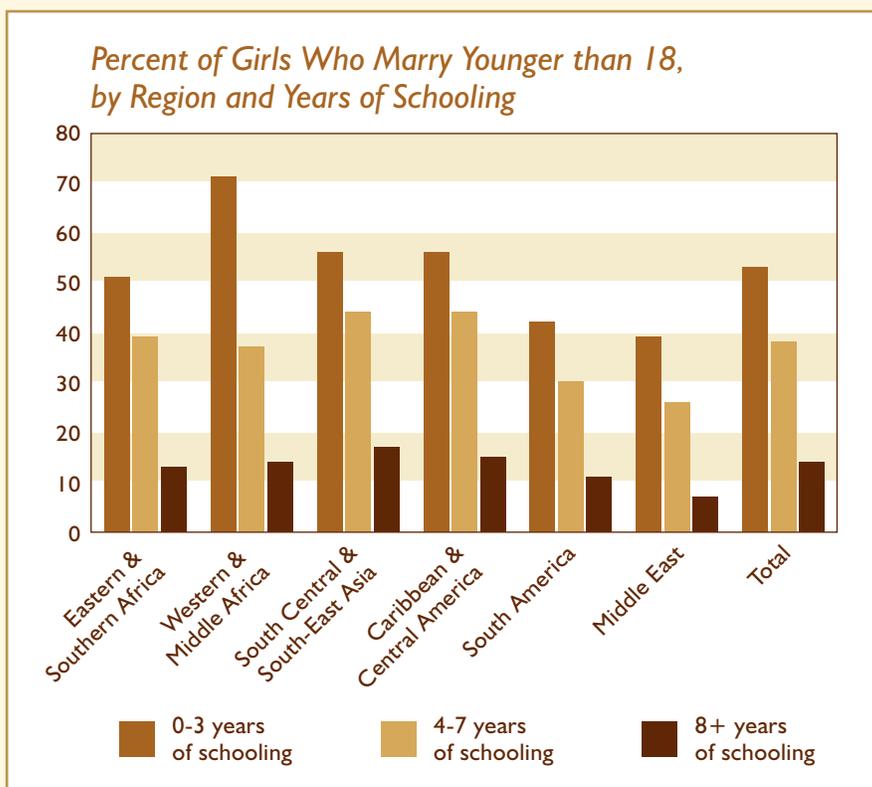
Girls may be married at young ages due to a lack of other alternatives, such as educational or economic opportunities, or girls may be pulled from school to be married. In the Amhara region of Ethiopia, 30 percent of girls who were not in school said that the primary reason was marriage.⁶

After marriage, young girls' access to formal and even nonformal education is severely limited because of domestic burdens, childbearing and social norms that view marriage and schooling as incompatible.⁷

- In Nicaragua, 45 percent of girls with no education are married before they turn 18, compared to 28 percent of girls with primary education, 16 percent of girls with

a secondary education and 5 percent of girls with higher education.⁸

- In Mozambique, some 60 percent of girls with no education are married by 18, compared to 10 percent of girls with secondary schooling and less than 1 percent of girls with higher education.⁹
- In Senegal, 41 percent of girls with no education are married as children, whereas only 14 percent of girls with a primary education marry as children.¹⁰



EDUCATION DETERS CHILD MARRIAGE

Educating adolescent girls has been a critical factor in increasing the age of marriage in a number of developing countries, including Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand.¹¹ In India and Pakistan, increased school enrollment has likewise been associated with a decline in marriage among girls younger than 14.¹²

Programs that provide or increase educational and economic opportunities for girls can help delay marriage. Working with parents to delay marriage can be critical in getting girls educated. For example,

- The Christian Children's Fund's (CFF) Naning'oi Girls Boarding School project in Kenya delays age of marriage of Maasai girls by encouraging parents to "promise" their daughters to school, instead of promising them in marriage. Parents of children in the Naning'oi promise to enroll their daughters for eight years of school. A strong sense of honor keeps parents from breaking this promise. The Naning'oi girls' school has a 98 percent completion rate.
- The Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) International has been working to increase girls' education in Zimbabwe since 1993. CAMFED provides locally managed safety net funds to support vulnerable girls to attend school. To increase community support for girls' education, CAMFED program staff work with parents to delay the marriage of their daughters until they have completed school.¹³ Parental support in delaying marriage has proven necessary to keep girls in school.

REFERENCES

¹ The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2005). *Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries*. Panel on Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries. Cynthia B. Lloyd, Ed. Committee on Population and Board on Children, Youth, and Families. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, p. 432.

² Jain, Saranga and Kathleen Kurz (2006). ICRW research on prevalence and predictors of child marriage in developing countries. In progress.

³ Notes: Countries included in the analysis are Niger, Chad, Bangladesh, Mali, Guinea, Central African Republic, Nepal, Mozambique, Uganda, Burkina Faso, India, Ethiopia, Liberia, Cameroon, Malawi, Nicaragua, Nigeria and Zambia. Researchers were not able to gain permission to use and analyze data from Eritrea and Yemen at the time of publication. Potential determinants of age at marriage considered in the analysis include region, type of place of residence (urban vs. rural), wealth, religion, ethnicity, education, spouse's education, polygyny, age gap, childhood place of residence and number of siblings.

⁴ The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2005).

⁵ Note: The chart presents data of women ages 20 to 24 years, who were married before age 18. Data includes Demographic Health Surveys for all countries available in the listed regions. The total includes all recent DHS surveys.

⁶ Erulkar, A., T. Mekbib, N. Simie and T. Gulema (2004). *The Experience of Adolescence in Rural Amhara Region Ethiopia*. UNFPA, UNICEF, and Population Council. Population Council: New York.

⁷ Mathur, S., M. Greene and A. Malhotra (2003). *Too Young to Wed: The Lives, Rights and Health of Young Married Girls*. ICRW: Washington D.C.

⁸ UNICEF (2005). *Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice*. UNICEF: New York.

⁹ UNICEF (2005).

¹⁰ UNICEF (2005).

¹¹ Mathur, S., M. Greene and A. Malhotra (2003).

¹² Hussain, R. and A.H. Bittles (1999). "Consanguineous marriage and differentials in age at marriage, contraceptive use, and fertility in Pakistan." *Journal of Biosocial Science* 31(1): 121-38.

¹³ Asfaha, S. (2003). *Independent evaluation report: CAMFED and CAMA Programmes Zimbabwe 1993-2003*.

To learn more about child marriage, contact the **International Center for Research on Women**

HEADQUARTER OFFICE:

1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW | Suite 302 | Washington, DC 20036 | tel: 202.797.0007 | fax: 202.797.0020 | email: info@icrw.org | www.icrw.org

COUNTRY OFFICE:

42, 1st Floor | Golf Links | New Delhi – 110 003 | India | tel: 91.11.2465.4216 | fax: 91.11.2463.5142 | email: info@icrwindia.org

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