
Understanding and addressing child marriage

A scoping study of available academic and
programmatic literature for the HER CHOICE Alliance

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List of Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GNB	Girls Not Brides
ICDI	International Child Development Initiatives
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
SKN	Stichting Kinderpostzegels Netherlands
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
THP	The Hunger Project
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UvA	The University of Amsterdam

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1. Introduction

Child marriage is an issue affecting millions of children, especially girls, in both the developing and developed world. However, it is only relatively recently that the issue has found its place on the international agenda, pushed by the Elders in the creation of the Girls Not Brides partnership and rapidly spreading on the agendas of governments, grass root and international organisations, and the United Nations.

Her Choice is an alliance composed of four Netherlands-based organisations: Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland (SKN), The Hunger Project (THP), International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) and the Amsterdam Institute for Social Studies (AISSR) of the University of Amsterdam. SKN, THP and ICDI work with 27 local partner organisations in 11 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in an effort to reduce the prevalence of child marriage. The AISSR/UvA is responsible for programme-related research, including impact evaluation of the Her Choice programme. Her Choice will be carried out from January 2016 to December 2020, and is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

The current scoping study was commissioned by the AISSR/UvA. The study examines current literature on child marriage in order to give an overview of the topic and identify thematic and geographic gaps in the literature. As well as examining global information and projects, the report specifically focuses on the 11 project countries of the Her Choice SRHR alliance; Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Uganda. **Due to the fact that child marriage affects more girls than boys, the literature focuses almost exclusively on marriage amongst girl children.** As such, this study will frequently only discuss child marriage amongst girls.

The study provides an overview of the literature on: the prevalence of child marriage (Chapter 2); forms of marriage (Chapter 3); the reasons and effects of child marriage (Chapters 4 and 5) the relationship between child marriage and education (Chapter 6); laws relating to the topic (Chapter 7) and organisations and actors involved in interventions (Chapters 8 and 9). This information is presented in both narrative form and tables. In text boxes, literature providing a critical or alternative viewpoint is highlighted. In **red**, the report flags where information is missing in the literature. This information is also summarised in Chapter 10.

1.1 Methodology

Based initially on Terms of Reference for this scoping study, which specified the preliminary themes that were thought to be relevant to child marriage, the information used in this report was gathered from organisation's policy and reporting documents, websites, news sites and articles published in academic journals. Together referred to as "literature"

Organisational documents were found by identifying the relevant organisations, using information from the Girls Not Brides network and Google searches, and then using search engines on the organisations' sites to find their documentation on child marriage. Organisational documents were also obtained through the partner organisations of the "Her Choice" alliance.

Academic articles were found by using journal database searches, including JSTOR, Google Scholar and the UvA library. Articles which included the terms "child marriage" or "early marriage" in the title and/or abstract were searched for first. To narrow down this search, the country names were then used as an additional search criteria (searching for the country name in the main body of the text). This was done separately for each country.

As gathering data progressed and new themes and gaps in the research collected became apparent, searches were carried out to expressly look for this information, for example searching for forms of marriage, and child protection policies.

The relevant literature was then compiled into both an annotated bibliography and a database. The annotated bibliography summarises the key arguments in the texts as well as highlighting any critical points that arose. The database lists the author of the text, the title, the country or region that it is applicable to, what kind of document it is and whether it is based on qualitative or quantitative research. It then also identifies what topics are discussed in the text; for example the prevalence of child marriage, the types of child marriage, intervention strategies, legal frameworks etc. Filters have been applied to each of the fields to allow users to search for documents by geographic region/research type/topic etc.

Information on international laws relating to child marriage was generally available in organisational literature. The treaty documents were then downloaded to find the relevant articles and clauses.

CEDAW country reports were the main source used to obtain information on national laws relating to child marriage and domestic violence. Where the reports did not contain the relevant information, or were not specific enough, internet searches were used to obtain the relevant legal documents.

Girls Not Brides were contacted, especially regarding areas where gaps were found in research and regarding what started the momentum towards tackling child marriage. A contact at Girls Not Brides provided a number of further resources, including GNB annual reports and videos, and also provided in-depth answers to the questions posed to them.

1.2 Definition of child marriage

Before examining the topic of child marriage, it is important to understand how child marriage is defined in the literature and by stakeholders.

1.2.1 Defining the “child” in child marriage

In the literature of international organisations, such as UNICEF, UNFPA, Save the Children, Population Council etc., and in the international community more generally (including the UN and the African Union), child marriage is defined as a marriage entered into when one or both spouses are under the age of 18.¹ The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by the 11 project countries, also specifies the age of childhood as being below 18 and marriage below 18 is prohibited in international, and many national laws. Marriage under 18 is also the recognised definition of child marriage in the international community.

At the national level, however, legal and social definitions vary significantly and can be conflicting, complicating notions of child marriage and making implementation of child marriage laws difficult. Many religions, for example, prescribe that childhood ends at puberty, often the age of menarche for a girl, and traditions prescribe that children become adults after undergoing initiation rites. It is often permitted and/or advised that marriage should take place shortly after these transitions to adulthood.² This is explored in section 7.

¹ UNFPA 2012c; Yarrow et. al. 2015

² Plan 2013; Marcus 2015b; Maswikwa 2015; UNFPA 2013

1.2.2 Defining marriage

Marriage comes in a variety of forms (expanded on in section 3), where marriage can be legal, religious, customary, traditional or informal. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Often marriages take place with no registered legal recognition, yet such marriages are still formally recognised and upheld in the community.

To account for the multiple forms of marriage, the literature describes marriage as a culturally sanctioned union that establishes rights and obligations between the couple, their children and broader families.³ This can be difficult to identify in quantitative surveys, and so researchers sometimes use cohabitation as a signpost for marriage when analysing quantitative data such as household surveys.⁴

1.2.3 Child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage

The terms child marriage and early marriage are often used interchangeably with forced marriage, as it is perceived that children are not able to give their free, prior and informed consent. This perception is both because they are believed not to have the maturity to make such decisions and because they often aren't given the chance to make a decision. According to the UNFPA and studies by the Ford Foundation and Plan International, children may also "willingly" accept marriage as their fate as they have little understanding of other life options and can be coerced into marriage with social or emotional pressure.⁵

1.3 Child marriage on the international Agenda

As section 7 demonstrates, international laws that have relevance to child marriage have been evolving since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. It is in the last decade, however, that there has been a dramatic increase in attention to the topic by international organisations, NGOs and governments. This is depicted in Table 1, which demonstrates this drastic increase in public attention, especially within the last 5 years.

The majority of literature does not state what drove this spark in attention. However discussions with Girls Not Brides highlighted the important role that the Elders played in bringing child marriage onto the international agenda. The Elders are "an independent group of global leaders working together for peace and human rights".⁶ They began working on child marriage in 2010, where they sought to address gender inequality and tackle the effect of religion and tradition in justifying gender discrimination. The work on child marriage taking place before this time tended to be small scale and was not receiving adequate funding.⁷ In 2011, The Elders launched Girls Not Brides in order to give child marriage more visibility and determine the role that civil society could play in addressing the issue. The mission statement created for Girls Not Brides agreed that the partnership would work together to raise awareness, create political and financial support and share learning on effective and ineffective interventions. The organisation has continued to grow since (becoming independent in 2013), as has international action on the issue and the commitment of both developing and developed countries to tackle the issue.⁸ The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provided a vehicle for this action, as it became clear that adolescent girls were being left

³ Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁴ Gyimah 2009

⁵ UNFPA 2012; Yarrow et. al. 2015; Walker 2012

⁶ The Elders: <http://www.theelders.org/about>

⁷ Personal communication with GNB 2015

⁸ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmZEbYVGekA>

behind with the MDGs and that addressing child marriage would also address other goals, such as education and maternal health.⁹ This new attention resulted in increased interest around child marriage and increasing evidence around the links between child marriage and other issues.¹⁰

Media attention around the issue of child marriage has also significantly increased in recent years, and this can, at least in part, be put down to the creation of Girls Not Brides and the first UN Day of the Girl Child (in 2012), which was focused on child marriage.¹¹ Child marriage is now also explicitly noted in the Sustainable Development Goals under Goal 5.3: “Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation”.¹² This gives further impetus for action and attention.

In the Netherlands, as well as increasing international attention on the issues, it is possible that Princess Mabel’s call for action to tackle child marriage has pushed the issue higher on the national agenda. The princess is the Girls Not Brides Board Chair, and has attended many events including attending expert meeting organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in October 2015.¹³ The issue has also hit the news due to the fact that marriages to minors are not recognised under Dutch laws, however loopholes in legislation allow child bride asylum seekers to be reunited with their, often much older, husbands. This is a growing problem with the increase of refugees to the country Netherlands where many young female asylum seekers are now considered to be at threat of abuse until this loophole is closed.¹⁴

Table 1- Timeline of child marriage in the international community

1948	The Universal Declaration of Human rights
1962	The UN Convention on the Consent to Marriage
1979	UN approves CEDAW
1989	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
1994	International Conference of Population and Development Countries agree to take action to eliminate child marriage
1995	Fourth World Conference on Women Plan of Action includes section on Child marriage
2001	<i>Publication: UNICEF - Early Marriage: Child Spouses</i>
2005	<p>The Maputo Protocol to African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women 18 as minimum age of marriage</p> <p><i>Publications:</i> <i>UNICEF – “Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice Estimating prevalence of child marriage”</i> <i>ICRW – “Too Young to Wed: Education and Acton Toward Child Marriage recommending how US can end practice”</i> <i>The Population Council – “Child Marriage in the Context of the HIV epidemic”</i></p>
2006	<p><i>USAID publishes first brief on Child Marriage</i></p> <p><i>IPPF and the Forum on Marriage publishes “Ending Child Marriage: A Guide for Global Policy</i></p>

⁹ Personal communication with GNB 2015

¹⁰ Personal communication with GNB

¹¹ Communications Consortium Media Center 2014

¹² United Nation: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

¹³ Girls Not Brides 2015a

¹⁴ Holigan 2015

	<i>Action”</i>
2007	<p><i>Publications:</i> <i>The Population Council – “Reaching the Girls Left Behind”</i> <i>ICRW – “New Insights on Preventing Child Marriage and How to End Child Marriage: Action Strategies for Prevention and Protection”</i></p>
2008	<i>World Vision publishes “Before She’s Ready: 15 Placed Girls Marry at 15”</i>
2011	<p>The Elders launch Girls Not Brides at Clinton Global Initiative The Commonwealth Heads of States commit to addressing early marriage</p> <p><i>Publications:</i> <i>ICRW – “Solutions to End Child Marriage, What the Evidence Show”</i> <i>PRB – “Who Speaks For Me? Ending Child Marriage”</i> <i>Plan International – “Breaking Vows: Early and Forced Marriage and Girls’ Education” and “Take the Vow”.</i> <i>HRW – “How Come You Allow Little Girls to be Married?”</i> <i>ICRW – “Delaying Marriage for Girls in India - Research for Changing Norms.”</i></p>
2012	<p>The First International Day of the Girl Child Too Young to Wed photo exhibit at UN World Health Assembly Includes Child Marriage at annual meeting EU Strategic Framework in Human Rights adds protection against child marriage US Presidential Memorandum includes section on child marriage</p> <p><i>Publications:</i> <i>UNFPA – “Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage”</i> <i>USAID – “Ending Child Marriage and Meeting the Needs of Married Children: Vision for Action”</i> <i>UNICEF – “ABC’s For Action and Advocacy: A Note on Child Marriage.”</i> <i>UN Special Envoy on Global Education – “Out of Wedlock into School.”</i></p>
2013	<p>High Level Panel on Post-2015 MDGs adds Child Marriage to Agenda Obama signs Violence Against Women act with section on Child Education Summit Addresses ECM UN Commission on Status of Women has first special session on ECM ICRW launch Turning Point Campaign UN Human Rights Council Resolution on ECM GNB expand to 3- member organisations in 50 countries</p> <p><i>Publications:</i> <i>Council on Foreign Relations – “Ending Child Marriage: How Elevating the Status of Girls Advances U.S. Foreign Policy Objective”.</i> <i>Violence Against Women Journal – “Girl Child Marriage and its Association with National Rates of HIV, Maternal Health and Infant Mortality Across 97 Countries.”</i> <i>Plan International – “A girl’s right to say no to marriage - working to end child marriage and keep girls in school.”</i> <i>Human Rights Watch – “This Old Man Can Feed Us, You Will Marry Him”</i> <i>Anti-Slavery International – “Out of the Shadows: Child Marriage and Slavery”</i> <i>World Vision: “Untying the Knot: Exploring Early Marriage in Fragile States”</i></p>

Adapted from CCMC 2014, pp. 12 - 14

2. Prevalence of Child Marriage

2.1 Measuring rates of child marriage

Statistics on child marriage in the literature tend to be collected through household surveys, either carried out by international organisations or by ministries within the country. From these datasets, rates of child marriage can either be derived from current data, or retrospective data. Current data examines the number of girls who are married at the time of the survey, often between the ages of 15-19. Retrospective data examines the number of women (usually 20-24 years old) who were married as children. The majority of research uses this latter retrospective measure, as the currently married 15 to 19 year olds measure misses the figures of children who were single at the time of the study, but do go on to marry before the age of 18.¹⁵

Key datasets include:

- Demographic Health Surveys carried out by ICF International (funded by USAID) (<http://www.dhsprogram.com/>)
- Demographic Health Surveys carried out by country ministries
- The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey carried out by UNICEF (http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_24302.html)
- Child Marriage Database from the MACHEquity program at McGill University (http://machequity.com/dashboards/cm_uni_dashboard.html)

2.2 Global and general information

2.2.1 Global Rates of Child Marriage

In the developing world **1 in 3 girls will marry by 18** and **1 in 9 girls will marry by 15** - this equates to 39,000 children being married every day. Half of these child marriages will take place in Asia and one fifth in Africa.¹⁶ Indeed 50% of girls will be married before 18 in South Asia and 40% in Africa.¹⁷ It is widely accepted in the literature that child marriage affects significantly more girls than it does boys, **however existing research and literature pays little attention to the prevalence rates of child marriage amongst boys.**

2.2.2 Global trends in the prevalence of child marriage

The above rates of child marriage remain consistent, despite near universal commitment to end child marriage. The fact that global rates of child marriage remain static means that, due to population growth, **absolute numbers of married children are growing.** If the present global trends continue, 142 million girls will be married as children between 2011 and 2020, and 151 million will be married in the following decade. Even if rates decrease, they are still likely to translate into higher absolute numbers of child brides due to population growth.¹⁸

It is important to note however, that rates of child marriage vary drastically both within and between countries. West Africa, which has the highest rates of child marriage on the continent, provides a good example of this variance between countries. Generally speaking, rates of child marriage in West Africa remain static, in line with the global trend. However, in Sierra Leone, Nigeria

¹⁵ UNFPA 2012

¹⁶ UNFPA 2012

¹⁷ IPFF 2006

¹⁸ UNFPA 2012

and Senegal there have been significant improvements, with rates of marriage declining. Conversely, in other countries, including Benin and Burkina Faso, rates of child marriage have increased in the last decade (for more information, see Table 2 below).¹⁹

Within countries, the variance in prevalence is also significant, and often follows certain trends across the globe. Regionally, prevalence rates follow the urban-rural divide, where girls living in rural areas are twice as likely to marry young as those in urban areas; 44% of girls are likely to marry as children in rural areas, compared to 22% in urban. Socio-economically, girls from the poorest backgrounds are more likely to marry as children than those from richer backgrounds. Figures suggest that, globally, 54% of girls in the poorest household income quintile marry as children, compared to 16% in the richest.²⁰ Interestingly, as demonstrated in section 2.1.3 below, rates according to income often aren't linear, again varying country by country. Another global trend is that the more education a girl has, the less likely she is to marry as a child. This trend is linear and is very strong at secondary education level.²¹ In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, girls with no education are 5 times more likely to be married as children than those with a secondary education.²² The explanations for these trends will be explored in closer detail in sections 4 and 6.

It is recognised throughout the literature that religion and ethnicity are correlated with and effect prevalence of child marriage within countries.²³ There is, however, no global trend suggesting that one religious group has higher rates of child marriage than another. Instead, prevalence rates in religious groups vary country-by-country. Generally, with regards to ethnicity or caste, it is the poorer and lower educated groups that have higher rates of child marriage (in line with the trends above). However, in some instances such as in Nepal, girls in the highest castes also face the most pressure to marry as a child as parents seek to “protect” their valuable daughters’ safety and prevent them from eloping.²⁴ Despite literature making frequent reference to the role of ethnicity and especially religion on the prevalence of child marriage, **very few studies provide details of rates of marriage by religion and ethnicity/caste.**

¹⁹ Walker 2013

²⁰ UNFPA 2012

²¹ Brown 2012; Sah 2008; Walker 2013; Yarrow et. al. 2015

²² UNFPA 2012

²³ Yarrow et. al. 2015; Samuels and Ghimire 2014; Walker 2012

²⁴ Samuels and Ghimire 2014

2.3 National data

Table 2 – National data on the prevalence of child marriage (2006 – 2011).

Country	Prevalence of child marriage according to demographics (%)												Min. age of marriage		Country Notes
	Total prevalence Married by 15		Residence		Education			Household Wealth							
			Rural	Urban	None	Primary	Secondary or Higher	Poorest 20%	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	Richest 20%	Female	Male	
Bangladesh	65	29	70.3	53.3	82	80.4	57.2	83	78	72	59	46	18	21	Bangladesh has the highest rate in the world of girls married by the age of 15. Prevalence is highest in West Bangladesh, especially the Khulna Region (75%), Rajshashi Region (73%) and Barisal Region (72%)
Benin	32	11	46.8	18.8	47.1	27.8	6.1	57	51	45	27	11	18	18	Prevalence is highest in the North of the country in the region of Alibori (77%) and lowest in Littoral in the South (8%)
Burkina Faso	52	10	61.2	26.8	59.8	41.5	3	61	64	60	57	26	17	20	Rates of child marriage are increasing Prevalence is highest in the Sahel region (86%) and the East region (76%)
Ethiopia	41.2	16	49	21.7	62.9	37.5	10.3	59	56	47	42	22	18	18	Rates of child marriage are highest in the Amhara region (45%)
Ghana	21	5	37.7	12.7	46.5	41.6	15.3	22	31	52	5	27	18	18	Rates of child marriage by household wealth are non-linear Northern parts of the country have the highest prevalence of child marriage, with rates up to 50% Figures suggests rates are slowly decreasing
Mali	55	15	76.5	60.4	77	64.3	37.9	73	78	77	76	58	16	18	The highest rates of child marriage are in Kayes (87%) and Kidal (84%) Child marriage rates declined by 16% between 2006 & 2012 Legal age of marriage for female decreased from 18 in 2010 Legal age of marriage for males decreased from 21 in 2010

Nepal	40.7	10	42.9	26.9	71.7	56.7	22.9	62	52	48	36	17	20	20	<p>Rates of child marriage are especially high in hilly and mountainous areas. The highest proportion of young marriages are practiced among Muslims (60.5%), followed by Hindus (43.5%) with Christians practicing the least number.</p> <p>Ethnicity/caste plays a major role in the prevalence of child marriage, with 87% of Terai Dalit practicing child marriage, 64% of the (illiterate) Hill Dalit and 38% of Terai janajati. Hill Janajati practice the lowest rates of child marriage at 29.2%</p> <p>Legal age of marriage for females raised from 18 in 2002</p> <p>Legal age of marriage for males decreased from 21 in 2002</p> <p>Legal age of marriage 18 with parental consent for both males and females</p>	
Pakistan	24	3	29.3	15.6	40	22.8	9.9	49	33	24	18	10	16	18	<p>Pakistan has some of the highest rates of child marriage amongst boys</p>	
Senegal	32.9	12	49.3	16.9	48.1	26	6.2	57	46	32	22	13	18	18	<p>Rates are declining</p> <p>Prevalence is especially high in the Southern region of Kolda (68%) and lowest in Ziguinchor (11%)</p>	
Sierra Leone	44	18	61.1	30.4	64.2	51.8	12.1	62	63	65	45	23	18	18	<p>Prevalence is highest in the North (60%), followed by the South (56%). The small Western Area has the lowest rate of child marriage (24%)</p> <p>Legal age of marriage for females and males decreased from 21 in 2006</p>	
Uganda	40	10	51.8	26.9	66.8	48.4	13.8	62	59	47	49	26	21	21		

Adapted from UNFPA 2012c and also using statistics and information from Girls Not Brides country profiles online (see <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/>).

3. Forms of Marriage

It is evident from literature that there are numerous different forms of marriage in each country and that these often vary by religious and ethnic groupings. The main distinction in the literature, both organisational and academic, is drawn between legally registered marriages and traditional or religious marriages, which are conducted by a religious or traditional leader.²⁵ Research into marriage in South Asia shows that traditional religious and legal marriages are often combined, with the traditional/religious marriage taking place first, followed by official registration.²⁶ When a religious or traditional ceremony is not legally registered, however, organisational documents frequently highlight that it is still very much considered an official union in the community and often country.²⁷ This can make tackling child marriage using legal means more difficult, as we will see in section 7.

A distinction is also often drawn between arranged and 'love marriage', finding that child marriage occurs significantly more frequently in the form of arranged marriage. Marriage which involves the payment of the bride price or dowry is also frequently discussed, as are the consequences of this transaction (as explored in section 4.2.3).²⁸ Many texts across regions also draw the distinction between monogamous and polygynous marriages, noting especially here that gender based violence is more common in polygynous relationships.²⁹

Beyond this, and despite acknowledgement that many different forms of marriage exist, **there is little information available on the different forms of marriage within countries, the prevalence of different forms of marriage or the prevalence of child marriage according to different forms of marriage.** The information that is available in the 11 project countries is summarised below.

3.1 Bangladesh

Yarrow (2015) draws the distinction between arranged marriages and love marriages in Bangladesh. Arranged marriages are most common, and also the most accepted. They are usually arranged by the couple's parents or older relatives and often include the payment of the dowry, from the bride's parents to the groom's, in the form of money or material goods.

Love marriages are significantly less common in Bangladesh; however some suggest that they are on the increase in urban areas. Love marriages are not generally accepted in Bangladesh and have much stigma attached to them, largely derived from the belief that a prior illicit sexual relationship has led to the marriage. In some instances a couple intending to marry for love may be required to elope in order to marry and may have to sever ties with their family. This can be damaging to reputations of the couple and their families within the community, especially the reputations of the bride and her family.

3.2 Benin

Falen (2008) identifies that 27% of men in Benin are in polygynous relationships, that is where a man is married to multiple women. Polygynous relationships are especially desirable for men in rural

²⁵ Yarrow et. al. 2015; UNFPA 2012; Elrulka 2009

²⁶ Yarrow et. al. 2015

²⁷ UNFPA 2012; Marcus 2015b; Equality Now 2015

²⁸ Care 2012; Tunne 2008; Bates 2007

²⁹ Fallen 2008; Walker 2012; Ghimire and Samuels 2014

areas as they result in more numbers to work the land. Traditionally marriages, whether polygynous or monogamous, are based around an expectation of brides' virginity, the bride wealth payment and a contract between families and guarantee of rights and responsibilities between spouses. This is increasingly changing in urban areas, where relationships now often start with a sexual relationship leading onto cohabitation and a more informal marriage, where responsibilities are drawn up by the couple.

The United States Department of State (2013) and the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2013) identified that in Benin, forced and child marriage can come in the form of:

- Simple forced marriage - a wife is not consulted on her choice of husband
- Marriage by barter – two families exchange their children, promising their daughters for marriage
- Marriage by abduction – The family of the future husband, usually with the consent of the girl's relatives, abducts the bride to be and the groom rapes her, as consummation of the marriage.

Girls Not Brides (2015) state that *trokosi* is a common practice across Benin. *Trokosi* involves a young virgin girl being offered to a local priest in exchange for God's forgiveness when a (usually male) relative commits a crime.³⁰

3.3 Burkina Faso

According to Engebretsen and Kabore (2011), the majority of marriages in Burkina Faso are arranged, with girls often given as a reward to the groom's family. If this exchange did not occur straight away, girls are "owed" to the groom's family, with such agreements taking place at any age from the both of the girl. Less common, but still present, in Burkina Faso is exchanging a girl for goods or services or to secure familial relationships. When young girls marry in Burkina Faso, they are often the second or third wife to an older man in a polygynous union, indeed 46% of women who are married before 18 are in polygynous relationships, compared with 14% who marry after 18.³¹

3.4 Ethiopia

Erulkar and Muthengi (2009) briefly discuss that arranged marriages are the most common form of marriage in Ethiopia. The groom's family appoints an elder to negotiate with the girl's family, and when an agreement has been reached, the families exchange gifts, with the bride's family receiving the most. Marriages are often arranged for girls at a very young age, and the girl will then marry when she is deemed ready to independently run a household. In the meantime, the girl will either live with the groom's parents or make periodic visits to them. Girls are traditionally supposed to be married before or at the time of puberty.

3.5 Ghana

As in Benin, Girls Not Brides (2015) state that *trokosi* is a common practice across Ghana. *Trokosi* involves a young virgin girl being offered to a local priest in exchange for God's forgiveness when a

³⁰ Girls Not Brides 2015

³¹ Brady, Saloucou and Chong 2007

(usually male) relative commits a crime.³² *Trokosi* translates to “slaves of the gods” and once a girl is given to a priest she becomes his property and carries out domestic chores. After the girl begins to menstruate, *trokosi* also involves sexual servitude.³³

3.6 Nepal

Bajracharya and Amin (2012, pp.81 – 82) state that marriage patterns vary by location and ethnicity in Nepal, however the “predominantly Hindu and patrilineal population share many characteristics of marriage across the country”. Marriages in Nepal tend to be arranged, patrilocal and monogamous and usually involve a dowry.

3.7 Pakistan

Yarrow et. al. (2015) and Anderson and Hamilton (2015) writing on behalf of Plan International, and several organisational documents by SPARC highlight different forms of marriage in Pakistan, as outlined below.³⁴

- **Arranged marriages**
The majority of marriages in Pakistan are arranged by parents or older relatives and tend to take place between extended family members in order to strengthen kinship ties. Marriages are often arranged when the couple are very young and a long time before the wedding is due to take place. Most marriages involve dowry payments.
- ***Watta Satta* marriages**
Watta Satta marriages, or exchange marriages, are relatively common in more rural areas in Pakistan. *Watta Satta* translates as “give-take” and is the marriage exchange of a brother-sister or uncle-niece coupling across two households. Couples are often betrothed at a very young age, sometimes even before birth, but marriage is usually held off until the girl reaches puberty (usually defined as the age of menarche). *Watta Satta* marriages do not require the dowry and take place most frequently in poorer families. The idea is to establish reciprocity and accountability across the two families, especially to prevent violence and abuse. As such, the relative age of the bride and groom is not considered important and girls are often married to older men. The practice can put girls in precarious situations, as if one husband is abusive towards or divorces his wife, the husband in the other family is likely to do the same as a form of revenge.
- **Vani or Swari Marriages**
Vani or Swari marriages (also known as dand or baba marriages) are marriages to settle a feud between families, where a daughter is offered to settle a blood feud to an individual, family, tribe or clan, or is offered in appeasement for a wrong committed by her family. Females in these situations live in hostile environments where they are often treated as the enemy.

³² Girls Not Brides 2015

³³ Equality Now 2012

³⁴ SPARC ND; SPARC NDb

- **Marriage through vulvar**
This is the practice of selling a daughter for a price.
- **Marriage to the Quran**
Marriage to the Quran renders a girl ineligible for marriage due to her being symbolically married to the Quran. It is not a religious ceremony, but is used to ensure a female does not have any children and cannot claim her right to the family's assets and property. Sometimes poor families who cannot afford to marry their daughters also use this arrangement.
- **Love Marriage**
Love marriages in Pakistan are deeply stigmatised and considered very unacceptable, largely due to an absolute prohibition on relationships and sex outside of marriage and the separation of boys and girls in social life and school.

4. Reasons for Child Marriage

There is an abundance of literature discussing the multiple reasons girls are married young. Whereas literature often separates these different reasons quite distinctly, it is also evident throughout the literature that child marriage is caused by an interplay of social norms, economics, structures and familial motivations. It is not easy to determine which of these factors has the biggest influence on the prevalence of child marriage. Most studies suggest that unequal gender norms are the overarching reason for the existence and persistence of child marriage; norms which place a higher value on males than females and dictate the correct way a girl should behave and live.³⁵ A smaller body of literature argues that economic arguments are actually key, and that child marriage wouldn't occur if families were economically secure. There is clearly an interplay between these two factors as even if economic reasons are the primary cause of child marriage, gendered norms still dictate that it is normally girls who are married as children and not their male counterparts.

This section will provide an overview of the different reasons for the prevalence and persistence of child marriage found in the literature. It will divide the reasons into distinct categories, however this is done purely for comprehension, and, as said, in reality the factors are often interdependent and interacting. At the end of the section, table 3 depicts how the drivers of child marriage can be divided between two different levels; the family level and the wider, societal level.

4.1 Unequal gender norms and gender hierarchies

Unequal gender norms are often considered the prime reason for the prevalence of child marriage, and indeed the fact that it affects girls to a greater degree than boys. Greater value is hereby attached to males than females, the desirable role and behaviours girls should play in life are prescribed (as explored further below) and, in turn, the benefits of investing in girls' development and futures are discounted. These norms and hierarchies place power into men's hands, allowing them to exercise this power over many critical events and decision-making processes. In terms of fathers, therefore, (child) marriage can be seen as a way of transferring their patriarchal rights to their daughter over to another man. According to Walker (2012) and Yarrow et. al. (2015), this secures their social status as a dominant male, protects their property and possessions from falling

³⁵ Ghimire and Samuels 2014, Harper et al 2014, Jones et al 2014, Watson 2013b

into the hands of a female and improves their economic ties. Child marriage also rewards fathers financially through the dowry or bride price (explored further in section 4.2.3).³⁶

For the husband, in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal especially, marrying a young girl ensures that both the father and her husband retains dominance over her – as young girls are considered to be more obedient and respectful. Indeed, studies suggest that in Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Burkina Faso as well as elsewhere, this is the definition of a good daughter and bride, and also prescribes how she should behave. In these settings, a “good” and “valuable” female is often considered to be submissive, docile and shy. According to these studies, child marriage therefore both reflects and reinforces gender hierarchies and prescriptions for how a girl should behave; with men seeking subservient girls and the passive and subordinate role of females within social life meaning they are especially unlikely to contradict or challenge their fathers or husbands.³⁷

The desire for a husband to dominate his wife is considered one of the key reasons for the often significant age gap between husbands and child brides as in important ways; this age gap ensures that the bride will be more submissive. This is thought to make younger females more attractive to men, as does the fact that they are highly likely to be virgins.³⁸

Various studies suggests that another major reason for girls marrying younger than their male counter parts are the gender norms surrounding the division of labour in the household.³⁹ These prescribe that a female’s roles and responsibilities are confined to reproduction and domestic work, whereas a male is the leader and provider of the household. This means that physical and biological factors, notably puberty and menarche, define when a girl is old enough to marry and it is here, rather than in her skills and intelligence, that she is valued. Conversely, a male’s readiness to marry is defined by his cultural, social, economic and educational achievements which allow him to earn and provide for his family. A girl will therefore be “ready” to marry at a significantly younger age than a boy.⁴⁰ This division of labour is also believed to secure the male’s position of dominance in the household, as not only is his wife’s role considered to be inferior, but he also has control over financial assets, allowing him to control the activities and movements of his wife.

The division of labour is also considered to be important as in many instances a son will be encouraged to marry when his mother is no longer able to take care of the household. This then becomes the role of his new wife, who will care and carry out domestic work for her husband’s family.⁴¹

In Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan, organisational reports highlight that hierarchical gender norms and the higher value placed on men also create a difference in *why* males and females marry. For men, marriage is for the fulfilment of sexual, reproductive and household needs, for girls it is to negate against the risks of not marrying (see section 4.4) and to relieve the burden they place on their families (see section 4.2.1). Girls then are significantly more restricted and controlled in their agency.⁴²

³⁶ Yarrow et. al. 2015

³⁷ Yarrow et. al. 2015 (Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan); Samuels and Ghimire 2014 (Nepal); Engebretsen and Kabore 2011 (Burkina Faso)

³⁸ Yarrow et. al. 2015

³⁹ Perezneito and Tefra 2014 (Ethiopia); Samules and Ghmire 2014 (Nepal); UNFPA 2012 (Global); Bantebya, Muhanguzi and Watson 2014 (Uganda)

⁴⁰ Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁴¹ Jennings et al 2012

⁴² Yarrow et. al. 2015

Critical article

Archambault (2011) argues that child marriage, especially amongst the Maasai in Kenya, is not a traditional relic or a result of a patriarchal society. This article considers that the commonly used binaries between victim-perpetrator, tradition-modernity and patriarchal father-progressive child obscures the real structures that result in early marriage and in turn prevents appropriate policy interventions. Marriage, is in fact an adaptation to livelihood insecurity, where pastoralism is becoming increasingly difficult. In such circumstances, marriage is an important way of ensuring mutual support and reciprocity. Where there is a lack of faith in educational institutions, or a lack of money to send all children to school, marriage remains a key way of ensuring girls' security and livelihoods.

4.2 Economic contexts

Economic contexts are the second biggest reason identified in the literature for the prevalence of child marriage. This explanation is prevalent in both organisational and academic literature in all countries and regions and is often deeply connected with norms and gender hierarchies.⁴³ The economic reasons behind child marriage are divided into two; either parents choose to marry their child young as they feel this is the primary way of securing their daughter's future, or parents see their girl child as a financial burden that they can relieve themselves of, and profit by marrying her young. The economic contexts that result in child marriage can broadly be divided (although all are interrelated) into income poverty, economic dependency, the dowry or bride price and land and property rights.

4.2.1 Income poverty

As Section 2 depicts, household income has a clear effect on prevalence rates of child marriage, with rates significantly higher amongst girls in poorer families. Poverty then, is a major driver of the practice of child marriage as poverty creates powerful and rational incentives for child marriage, especially where the dowry or bride price is included (see section 4.2.3). Indeed, in many cases child marriage is believed to be used as a coping strategy for families living in poverty or financial insecurity and can become a means of survival.⁴⁴ Child marriage becomes a coping strategy because families are relieved of the financial pressure of caring for a girl when she is married, parents will save money in the case of a dowry or make more money in the case of the bride price if they marry their daughter young and families may be able to create important economic ties through marriage. Marrying a daughter to an economically secure man is also seen as a means of ensuring her financial security and protection into the future.⁴⁵

Increasingly, there are opportunities for (educated) girls to become part of the work force. Where this happens, girls are able to create an income and support their families. In many countries therefore, higher rates of female workforce participation have been found to be related with lower rates of child marriage, due to a change in economic incentives.⁴⁶ However, child marriage continues to persist despite workforce participation, especially in Nepal where both female workforce participation rates and child marriage rates are high.⁴⁷ A number of reasons can be derived from the literature for this persistence. Firstly, the gendered norms identified above prescribe that a women's

⁴³ Harper et al 2014; ICRW 2015; Walker 2012; Walker 2013; Yarrow et. al. 2015; Ghimire and Samuels 2014

⁴⁴ Perezniето and Tefera 2014; Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁴⁵ Perezniето and Tefera 2014; Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁴⁶ Bajracharya and Amin 2012

⁴⁷ Bajracharya and Amin 2012

role is in the home. Secondly, for many families, especially those in rural areas, opportunities just aren't available (see section 4.7). Third, in many cases, parents cannot afford to send all of their children to school in order to prepare them for the workforce (see section 4.7 and 6). When parents cannot afford to send all of their children to school, the gender norms described above and the traditional divisions of labour mean that boys tend to be favoured to be the child that receives an education. This favouring of boys is heightened by the fact that in many communities a bride will move in with her husband's family.⁴⁸ According to academic research into marriage in Africa, it is therefore perceived that a girl's own family will not be able to reap the benefits of investing in their daughters education, as the income she earns will go to her husband's family (although there is evidence that this is not the case, with research in Asia and Africa showing that married daughters giving to their parents is common).⁴⁹ In Nepal, research suggests that these factors, combined with inequalities in pay between males and females and the dowry, mean there is not a sufficient economic incentive to invest in girls'.⁵⁰ It must be argued that this especially true when there is an immediate and urgent need for money and resources for a family's survival.

4.2.2 Economic dependency of girls

As section 4.1 demonstrates, the role of girls is traditionally confined to domestic work and reproduction, this results in her being economically dependent on firstly her family, and then her husband. The literature, especially that focusing on Asia, explains that child marriage occurs as it transfers the economic burden of a daughter onto her new groom and because a girl is seen to need the financial security of a husband.⁵¹ In cases where there is the possibility of a girl entering the workforce, families may believe that their daughter will marry eventually anyway, and will leave employment to take on domestic work when she does so.⁵² This means that there is not a perceived need to wait for the daughter to be married and no need to invest in a her education.

4.2.3 The dowry/bride price

The dowry is the payment, in cash or kind, made on behalf of the girl's family to her future husband's family. Despite being outlawed in many countries, it is still the norm in countries in South Asia, including Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. The bride price is the gift(s) received, again in cash or kind, by the bride's family from her future groom's family. The bride price is more common in Africa, including Benin and Ethiopia.

As demonstrated in section 4.1, younger girls are generally considered more attractive as brides, and therefore girls are considered to be more valuable when they are young. This means that families have to pay a lower dowry or receive a higher bride price when they marry their daughters at a younger age. In Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal, organisational literature highlights that the dowry is both a direct and indirect driver of child marriage. It is a direct driver in that it provides a rational economic incentive for parents to marry their daughters when they are still children and an indirect driver in that it devalues women and reduces them to goods that can be bought and sold, with a market value that depreciates over time, as well as entrenching the position of females as economic

⁴⁸ Plan International 2015

⁴⁹ Eloundou-Enyegue and Calves 2006

⁵⁰ Bajracharya and Amin 2012

⁵¹ Yarrow et. al. 2015; Samuels and Ghimire 2014

⁵² Plan 2013b; IPPF 2006

burdens.⁵³ In academic literature and international development circles, the bride price is also considered to reduce girls to property that can be bought and sold, which gives girls less negotiating power in marriage and makes her more susceptible to physical and sexual violence.⁵⁴ High bride prices have also been identified by CARE (2012) as leading to increases in rates of rape and abduction.

The incentives offered by the dowry and bride price to marry daughters young are heightened in contexts of poverty and economic insecurity, where resources are needed for survival. It has been shown that when families face extreme difficulties in raising and preserving adequate resources for the dowry, they are likely to marry girls as soon as they have sufficient funds to do so.⁵⁵ Given that the funds needed will be significantly less when their daughter is young, families facing economic struggle are even more likely to marry their daughter from a young age.⁵⁶

In Bangladesh, Yarrow et al writing for Plan international (2015) found that the dowry can also affect the age of marriage of boys, as boys are pressured into marriage from a young age if a bigger dowry than expected is offered. The Plan study found that parents on occasion saw this in an easier investment in their sons than education, and used the money received to create income generating activities for the son.

4.2.4 Land and property rights

Few texts discuss the effect of land rights on child marriage, although many allude to property rights.

In a resource guide for USAID, Glinski, Sexton and Meyers (2015) discuss this relationship briefly, noting that in many settings (none in particular are referred to) women and girls often access and inherit land through male relatives as their names are not included on land titles. The text also highlights that the land and property rights of girls and women are made complicated due to inconsistencies between national laws and local practices, the latter of which often govern land and asset ownership. This complication therefore motivates families to marry their daughters in order to provide them with access to land for income and food security.

Bantebya, Muhanguzi and Watson (2014) report that in Uganda, girls and women are excluded from the ownership and control of productive assets such as land and livestock. Their exclusion increases their dependence and subordination to men for economic survival.

Fafchamps and Quisumbing (2005), discussing marriage in rural Ethiopia, highlight that in marriage, it is the groom that brings the vast majority of assets and resources, such as land and livestock. to a marriage, and that it is also the groom who receives the most assets from their families when marriage takes place. The latter point is especially true for intergenerational transfers of assets which usually take place at the time of marriage.

4.3 Influence of religion

Throughout the academic and organisational literature, and across countries, religion is considered another major driver of child marriage, and is also seen as a justification for the phenomenon.⁵⁷

⁵³ Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁵⁴ CARE 2012; Bantebya, Muhanguzi and Watson 2014

⁵⁵ Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁵⁶ Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁵⁷ Walker 2012; Sah 2008; Equality Now 2014; Warner 2013; World Vision UK 2014

Studies have found that religion can be a cause of child marriage as many parents and elders consider marrying their children to be a religious obligation. This sense of obligation is primarily caused by religious laws and customs, and religious leaders, dictating the age at which girls should marry.⁵⁸ The appropriate age for marriage is often considered to be the age that girls hit puberty, or the age of menarche. In Ethiopia, for example, Erulkarr and Muthengi (2009) found that it was considered shameful for a girl not to be wed before or when she first begins menstruating. Under Islamic law, which in countries such as Bangladesh is constitutionally recognised, a girl is ready to wed when she hits puberty, generally undefined in terms of age and often meaning age of menarche.⁵⁹ These religious laws and local customs give parents not only the impetus, but sometimes the right, to marry their daughters below the minimum age prescribed by national law.

Religious norms also highly value chastity and honour. They dictate that that sexual relationships, or in countries such as Pakistan all relationships between men and women, outside of marriage are deeply shameful. When relationships or sexual activities (whether consensual or not) do take place, it is the girl's family who are most deeply shamed, and the girl who is deemed to bear the ultimate responsibility.⁶⁰ This results in religious leaders advocating early marriage in order to prevent pre-marital sex and families marrying their daughters at a young age to prevent shame to the family of pre-marital sex, an issue further discussed in section 4.4.

Religious leaders also have been found to play a role in allowing child marriage, by conducting the unions of minors despite national or local laws against this. Various studies have shown that religious leaders do not always seek to obtain proof of age in weddings, and indeed that some forge documents, changing the girls age to make them appear legally able to marry. This is especially the case if a girl has fallen pregnant.⁶¹

It is argued by Walker (2012 and 2013) that such religious norms and preaching's are often used as a justification for parent's preference of early marriage when in fact other, more practical reasons (such as economics) are the main reason parents chose to marry their children young.

4.4 Securing honour

Linking closely with religious norms around chastity, honour is often considered hugely important to families and is something girls are under constant pressure to maintain, particularly (but not exclusively) in South Asian countries.⁶² Honour is lost and shame bought to the family when a girl has sexual intercourse or other sexual relations outside of marriage. A girl is usually held accountable for this pre-marital sex, regardless of whether or not she consented, and is judged and punished much more severely than her male counterpart.⁶³

Because of high prevalence rates of sexual violence and parents' fear that boys and girls mixing, in school for example, will result in sexual relationships, Yarrow, writing for PLAN (2015) suggests that in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal, unmarried girls are considered to pose a constant threat to their family's reputation. This perceived threat creates incentives to marry daughters young to avoid sexual activity and secure girls' and families' reputation. This incentive is increased as not only is pre-marital sex shameful, the fact that a girl is no longer a virgin means that she loses her value and thus

⁵⁸ Equality Now 2014; Hashemi 2007; Maswikwa et al 2015; World Vision UK 2014

⁵⁹ Centre for Reproductive Rights 2013; Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁶⁰ Watson 2013b; CARE 2012; Civil Society of Pakistan 2009; SPARC NDb

⁶¹ ICRW 2015; Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁶² Samuels and Ghimire 2014

⁶³ Samuels and Ghimire 2014; Watson 2013b; CARE 2012; Civil Society of Pakistan 2009; SPARC NDb; Yarrow et. al. 2015

the cost of the dowry rises. These motivations explain why in some countries such as Nepal, against the trend that child marriage is more common among the poorest in society, high caste, wealthier girls are also under pressure to marry young – to secure their safety and honour.⁶⁴

The shame bought by pre-marital sex, means that girls who have been raped may be married quickly to avoid shaming the family further, often to much older men. In Pakistan, a report prepared by Save the Children and Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (2009) demonstrated that these men are considered by most, including young people, to be “doing the girls a favour” (p.17).⁶⁵ In Uganda, researchers at the ODI found that if a high enough bride price was offered, girls would be married to their rapist.⁶⁶

Pregnancy before marriage causes even more shame and also often results in a very quick marriage to the father of the child, again even this man has raped the girl. Research in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan show that people believe forced marriage to be acceptable, and sometimes essential, in cases of pregnancy. This acceptability is further heightened by the fact that children born to unmarried mothers are often considered illegitimate. In Indonesia, for example, children born to unmarried mothers can be denied legal identity and access to services including health care and school.⁶⁷

In contexts where rape and sexual violence are extremely high, child marriage is not only seen as a way of avoiding shame, but also as a way of protecting girls from sexual violence.⁶⁸ This is despite the fact that the majority of girls then go on to face sexual and domestic violence in their marriage, as discussed in section 5.2.5.

Not only is it shameful for girls to have sexual intercourse before marriage, it is also shameful for a girl to be *seen* to want to engage in relationships outside of wedlock. Girls who are not married at an age deemed appropriate, and especially girls who are in schools where they interact with boys, may be perceived as not being married because they want to engage in pre-marital relationships. This finding was highlighted in a research paper by World Vision (2014) as especially significant in societies in Senegal and Somalia which traditionally practiced Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) but have abandoned the practice due to interventions. In these societies, girls who have not been circumcised are considered to have greater libidos and thus to be in greater danger of engaging in pre-marital relations (this issue is explored more in section 5.2.6). Samuels and Ghimire (2014) and World Vision (2014) report that in the context of Somalia, these perceptions of uncircumcised girls resulted in girls feeling pressured to marry at a young age, to avoid the stigma and maintain their reputation. The perception also encouraged parents to marry their daughters earlier for the same reason.⁶⁹

Finally various studies reveal that across countries, it is often shameful in itself for a girl not be married at an age deemed appropriate by the community.⁷⁰ This is a shame placed on the girl, who is considered incomplete and sexually irrelevant, and on her parents and family, who are seen to have failed in their parental duty of finding a suitable partner for their daughter. This sense of shame again, places societal pressure to marry girls at a young age.

⁶⁴ Samuels and Ghimire 2014

⁶⁵ Civil Society of Pakistan 2009

⁶⁶ Bantebya, Muhanguzi and Watson 2014

⁶⁷ Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁶⁸ UNFPA 2012

⁶⁹ World Vision UK 2014; Samuels and Ghimire 2014

⁷⁰ Erulkarr and Muthengi 2009; Yarrow et. al. 2015

4.5 Conflict and humanitarian crises

Closely linked to notions that early marriage protects a girl from sexual violence and secures her and her family's honour in contexts where female victims are held responsible for their own abuse, is the fact that rates of child marriage increase rapidly in conflict and disaster situations. This increase stems from the risk of sexual violence, which becomes significantly greater in such circumstances. The need for financial support and security also heightens in disaster situations, and so the economic ties that come with early marriage can further encourage parents to marry their daughters.⁷¹

The relationship between child marriage and conflict was seen in the humanitarian crisis that arose from the floods in Pakistan, where rates of child marriage significantly increased. In Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India, girls were married to tsunami widowers to obtain state subsidies for starting a family. Furthermore, during the civil war in Uganda, girls were frequently taken or given as "bushwives" to warlords in exchange for protection⁷² and in the civil war in Sierra Leone, girls were taken or given to boys or men, again as "bushwives", often as a reward for good fighting.⁷³

The most up-to-date organisational documentation highlights the fact that the current crisis in Syria is likely to result in significant increases in girls married as children.⁷⁴

4.6 Effects of family structures

It is evident from the above that girls face substantial pressure from their family to marry young, and indeed much more so than for boys. It is likely that family structure will also influence the pressure parents place on their children and rates of child marriage. There is some information, **albeit limited**, that discusses this effect.

Firstly it is found that parents with higher educational levels are less likely to marry their daughters at a young age. An academic study looking into the effects of mothers and mothers-in-law educational levels in Bangladesh, finds that when these are higher, a girl is likely to marry older and give birth to her first child later.⁷⁵ However, it is not clear as to why this is the case. The educational levels of parents may reduce the likelihood of child marriage because more educated parents are more knowledgeable about its harmful effects, value their daughters differently or are more likely to send their children to school. On the other hand, it could be that better educated parents can afford to send their daughters to school and reject the financial incentives of child marriage or are in an area where there are plenty of other opportunities for their children. An academic psychology study in Nepal by Barber (2004) suggests that the influence of education and other structures such as travel go beyond the family to effect child marriage in communities. If a person's neighbours, for example are better educated or well-travelled, the person is less likely to be accepting of early and arranged marriages.⁷⁶

In Nepal, academic research found that the number of siblings has a negligible effect on rate of child marriage (highlighting that this is contrary to other research), but that family structure was significant.⁷⁷ The authors found that girls who live only with their parents and siblings, in "nuclear

⁷¹ UNFPA 2012, Walker 2013, Warner et al 2013

⁷² UNFPA 2012; Carlson 2008

⁷³ Park 2006

⁷⁴ Spencer 2015

⁷⁵ Bates, Maselko and Schuler 2007

⁷⁶ Barber 2004

⁷⁷ Bajracharya and Amin 2012

households”, were more likely to marry as children than those in multigenerational households, probably because there are fewer resources and less financial support available.⁷⁸

In a rare article discussing child marriage amongst boys, Jennings et al (2012) discuss the effects of parental opinions on the age of marriage of their sons in the Chitwan Valley in Nepal. This article, based on a longitudinal qualitative study, found that if parents consider a large family to be desirable for their son, they will marry him at a younger age. A boy is also likely to be married younger if his parents require care, which will be provided for by the son and his new wife. However, this trend is changing; while fathers usually still desired their sons to be married at a younger age for care-giving purposes, mothers were found to be increasingly less likely to want this, due to the fact that spousal relationships were perceived as becoming increasingly affectionate, and mothers were concerned that their sons would be more likely to care for their wives than for them.

4.7 Lack of alternatives

Finally, a lack of alternative opportunities is considered a major driver of child marriage through-out the literature. Here, economic contexts, gendered divisions of labour and to girls safety link together to demonstrate that child marriage often exists and persists because other opportunities are not available to girls. This is especially true for educational opportunities and opportunities for workforce participation. Indeed the study by Plan International (Yarrow et al 2015) found that 93.5% of respondents in Bangladesh, 72.5% in Indonesia, and 68.9% in Pakistan agreed with the statement: “marriage of girls under 18 years mostly happens because there is a lack of education and job opportunities” (p.80).⁷⁹

The reason for a lack of educational opportunities is explored in section 6.3. Not going to school means that girls remain uneducated and their future possibilities diminish. There is a strong association between lack of education and higher rates of child marriage, discussed in more detail in section 6.

A lack of workforce opportunities is often the case simply because there are no jobs available, again, especially in rural areas. There are often even fewer jobs available to girls and when they are recruited, this tends to be into domestic servitude.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the role of girls often isn't considered to be in the employment market, but in the home. If there are no workforce opportunities for girls after school, the incentives to send girls to school are minimal if education is not intrinsically valued. A girl also becomes financially dependent on her family, and thus in need of the financial support of a husband. The result of this can be marriage from a young age.

⁷⁸ Bajracharya and Amin 2012

⁷⁹ Yarrow et. al. 2015

⁸⁰ UNFPA 2012; Yarrow et. al. 2015; Edmeades and Hayes 2014

Table 3 – Contextual and family-related drivers of child marriage

Contextual Drivers	Familial motivations
<p>Economic contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income poverty • Economic dependency of girls • Land rights <p>Influence of religion</p> <p>Conflict and humanitarian crises</p> <p>Lack of alternatives/opportunities</p>	<p>Economic contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income poverty • Economic dependency of girls • Dowry/bride price • Land rights <p>Securing Honour</p> <p>Family structures</p> <p>Lack of alternatives/opportunities</p>

5. Effects of Child Marriage

There is a considerable amount of literature which discusses the effects that child marriage has, both at an individual level and a national, socio-economic level. Most organisational documents discuss both of these levels, whereas academic research articles tend to focus on one or the other. Interestingly, at a multi-stakeholder workshop held in Bangladesh by UNFPA, Plan Bangladesh and the International Centre for Research on Women in 2014, it was found that when discussing child marriage, community members took a micro-level approach, looking at the immediate impact to girls, whereas Governments and NGOs took a macro-level perspective of economic growth and development.⁸¹

Building on existing literature, this paper will divide the effects of child marriage into what is defined as denying girls their childhood and the effect on a girl’s sexual and reproductive health. These elements have effects at both the individual and national level.

5.1 Denying a girl’s childhood.

Almost all organisational literature discusses the fact that child marriage denies young girls their childhood, their education and, in turn, their futures. This is often talked of as a violation of a girl’s rights, where child marriage prematurely ends childhood and imposes adult roles and responsibilities before a girl is physically, psychologically and emotionally prepared.⁸² In many cases, child marriage is also believed to lead to social isolation, where a girl is separated from her family and friends.⁸³ In addition, child marriage is heavily associated with an end to girls’ formal schooling.⁸⁴ According to the UNFPA (2012, p.6 and p. 12) child marriage curtails “a critical period for growth, learning, identity formation and experimentation” and “denies girls the opportunity to fully develop their potential as healthy, productive and empowered citizens”.

In denying a girl her formal education and the opportunity for what is seen as development and empowerment, child marriage reinforces the cycle of poverty and gender inequality as a girl is unable to engage in skilled or professional employment, becomes economically dependent on her husband, lacks both social and economic mobility and is often unable to negotiate in household decisions. All of these factors are perceived to have an immediate effect on the fulfilment of a girls

⁸¹ ICRW 2015

⁸² UNFPA 2012

⁸³ Edmeades and Hayes 2014; Warner 2013; UNFPA 2012

⁸⁴ Engebretsen and Kabore 2011

human rights and the quality of her life. As Harper et al (2014) observe, a lack of education means that a girl is also unable to access important information on sexual and reproductive health, her rights more broadly, as well as information that may allow her to earn and income.⁸⁵ A lack of economic independence also makes her extremely vulnerable to economic shocks.⁸⁶ The effect is also significant for the girl's future children and family. A lack of employment means that her family are more likely to remain in poverty, her children are less likely to be educated and thus they and their family will also live in poverty. This poverty, combined importantly with a lack of education on the mother's part, means that her children are more likely to be malnourished, and suffer from preventable disease and infection.⁸⁷

The elements discussed above not only affect the individual families, but have also been found to have a dramatic effect on countries' mortality rates, poverty rates and health care costs (see, for example, Brown 2012, Harper 2014, UNFPA 2012) Highlighted most frequently, however, is the effect that failing to educate girls and integrate them into the skilled workforce has on the overall economic development of a country. For example, a UNICEF study conducted in Nepal in 2014, found that due to the effects child marriage has on school dropout rates and future wages for females in the labour force, the cost of child marriage was about 74,498.53 million Nepalese rupees, or 3.87% of Nepal's GDP. As a comparison, in 2014, Nepal spent 4.7% of its GDP on education.⁸⁸ This estimated figure only considers labour market perspectives and does not take into account the costs of health, mortality and deprivation that result from child marriage, and thus the actual figure is likely to be substantially higher.⁸⁹ In view of the impact on socio-economic development, child marriage has thus been described as "an act of economic folly because it is destroying the skills base needed to drive economic growth, job creation and shared prosperity." (Brown 2012, p. 6).

5.2 Effects of child marriage on/issues relating to sexual and reproductive health

5.2.1 Child birth

Research shows that child marriage often leads to very early pregnancy and child birth for girls, who often, at least initially, feel unable to negotiate delaying child bearing with their husbands and in-laws.⁹⁰ Indeed, the majority of girls feel pressured into having their first child soon after marriage as new wives are often criticised if they try to delay their first birth. This can mean that having their first child can be the only way to meet the expectations of their new family, gain respect and substantiate their position in the new family and community.⁹¹ As a result, girls often become pregnant soon after marriage, when they know little about sex and reproduction and when their bodies are not ready for pregnancy or delivery. The relationship between child marriage and birth is especially significant as pregnancy and childbirth are the main cause of death for 15-19 year olds in developing countries.⁹² When the mother survives, early pregnancy can bring many complications, such as obstetric fistula⁹³, which leave girls in constant pain, vulnerable to infection, incontinent and often shunned by their husbands, families and communities.⁹⁴ Age is important here; girls who give

⁸⁵ Harper et al 2014

⁸⁶ Brown 2012; Edmeades and Hayes 2014

⁸⁷ Brown 2012; UNFPA 2012

⁸⁸ World Bank 2014

⁸⁹ Rabi 2014

⁹⁰ Lindstorm et al 2009; Gipson and Hindin 2007

⁹¹ Gipson and Hindin 2007; UNFPA 2012; Bates 2007; Engebretsen and Kabore 2011; Brady, Saloucou and Chong 2007

⁹² UNFPA 2012

⁹³ "An obstetric fistula is a childbirth complication due to obstructed labour when the tissues between a woman's vagina and her bladder or rectum are damaged from the continuous pressure from the baby's head stuck in the birth canal. The dead tissue falls off resulting in a hole through which the woman continuously leaks urine or faeces or sometimes both." Fookes 2013

⁹⁴ UNFPA 2012; CARE 2012

birth before 15 have been found to be five times more likely to die of pregnancy related causes than those who give birth after 20 years of age, and what is more, of all the females in developing countries who give birth between the ages of 15-19 years, 9 out of 10 are estimated to be married.⁹⁵

As well as early and complicated pregnancy, child marriage, across countries, also results in a girl giving birth to more children as a result of an elongated period of fertility and difficulties in negotiating family planning (discussed below).⁹⁶ In Bangladesh, it has been found that families may also choose to have more children for financial security where the death of a child (often not an uncommon phenomenon) can be financially devastating for a family.⁹⁷ Higher rates of childbirth, in turn, result in more deaths of both the mother and child and an increased strain on the resources of the family, perpetuating poverty. Furthermore, it heavily contributes to the rates of population growth that are straining resources in developing countries, again affecting socio-economic development at national levels.⁹⁸

5.2.2 Family planning and contraceptive use

As mentioned above, various studies including academic research and programme documentation highlight that when girls are married they often, at least initially, find it difficult to put off pregnancy and negotiate contraceptive use.⁹⁹ The difficulty in negotiation is often due to the fact that girls feel pressured into having their first child soon after marriage and powerless to refuse sex and insist on condom use.¹⁰⁰ Girls may also find negotiation difficult because they do not know the contraceptive options available to them, or because there is a lack availability.¹⁰¹ Research indicates that contraceptive use amongst married adolescents is low: at 22% amongst those aged 15 to 19, compared to 61% for those aged 15 to 49. Contraceptive use is lowest in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where rates of child marriage are highest. In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, there are also very high rates of unmet demands for contraception.¹⁰² **There appears to be a lack of information available for rates of contraceptive usage for girls below the age of 15, despite high rates of marriage amongst this age group.**

Availability of contraceptives and family planning varies significantly between and within countries. In Nepal, where girls are considered to have more of a say in who they marry, family planning is found to be increasingly common and effective. Safe abortion is also available to married girls and is used when family planning fails.¹⁰³ Research on Pakistan, on the other hand, shows that there is a lack of availability and access to contraceptives, and a lack of knowledge on family planning.¹⁰⁴

There have been many policy interventions seeking to make contraceptives more readily available for married women and girls, and to make women and girls aware of the options available to them. In many instances these have made a difference to fertility rates and the ability to negotiate contraception and family planning with husbands.¹⁰⁵ In Bangladesh, which has witnessed significant drops in fertility, an academic study by Gipson and Hindin (2007) found that wives felt unable to negotiate family planning or contraceptive use with their husband before their first birth, but

⁹⁵ UNFPA 2012

⁹⁶ Walker 2012; Bates 2007

⁹⁷ Gipson and Hindin 2007

⁹⁸ Greene 2014; PMNCH 2012

⁹⁹⁻⁹⁹ Lindstorm et al 2009; Gipson and Hindin 2007

¹⁰⁰ Gipson and Hindin 2007; UNFPA 2012; Brady, Saloucou and Chong 2007

¹⁰¹ UNFPA 2012; Yarrow et. al. 2015; Edmeades and Hayes 2014; Warner et al 2013; Walker 2012

¹⁰² UNFPA 2012

¹⁰³ Samuels and Ghimire 2014

¹⁰⁴ Doskoch 2013

¹⁰⁵ Gipson and Hindin; Edmeades and Hayes 2014

thereafter were much more able to negotiate and often their views were most adhered to. Where a wife's opinion was rejected, she would often act against her husband's will without his knowledge, by using or not using contraception, or by terminating a pregnancy. The authors argue that the ability to make such decisions against the husbands will in Bangladesh, however, may now become more difficult as distribution of contraceptives is moving away from home-based to clinic-based.¹⁰⁶

It is worth noting here, that access to contraception and family planning is often only available to married females. In Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan unmarried girls do not have access to family planning advice or contraceptives due to taboos and stigmas surrounding pre-marital sex. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, it has been found that unmarried girls are not taught about contraceptives or safe sex, for fear it will encourage them to engage in sexual relationships.¹⁰⁷

5.2.3 Access to health care services

The focus in the child marriage literature tends to be on contraception and family planning. **However, there is a limited amount of information available on further health care services.** In Nepal, for example, the ODI found that the majority of births now take place in healthcare facilities, due to the government offering free maternal delivery services and travel incentives to health care providers.¹⁰⁸

An academic study conducted by Doskoch (2013) in Nepal and Bangladesh finds that the number of antenatal visits made by mothers did not tend to differ by age, however Bangladeshi mothers who had married before 15 and Nepalese mothers who married aged 15-17 reported 8-15% less visits than those who married at 18 or above. Marrying as a child was also found to frequently, but not consistently, associate with reduced odds of having delivered at a healthcare facility or with someone trained to deliver babies.¹⁰⁹

In Burkina Faso, a study by the Population Council found that both married and unmarried adolescents do not use health centres, and have an urgent need for access to these and to health information and resources. Access to health centres is currently restricted in Burkina Faso as the majority of centres are in urban areas, with girls from rural areas unable to travel the long distances. Even if a health centre is accessible for a girl, she must first obtain permission from her husband or gatekeeper in order to visit.¹¹⁰

5.2.4 HIV and STIs

Marriage is sometimes seen as a safe space where sexual intercourse carries a lower risk of the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, especially HIV. This assumption has been countered – and marriage shown to be an unsafe space - by research revealing that rates of HIV are 50% higher amongst child brides compared to unmarried, sexually active girls.¹¹¹ There are many reasons as to why this is the case. Firstly, the younger a girl marries, the wider the age gap between her and her spouse, and so a girl's husband is likely to be older and have had more sexual partners. Secondly, married girls are more likely to engage in sex more frequently and usually not use a condom. They will also have little access to educational and media sources for information about HIV and in certain

¹⁰⁶ Gipson and Hindin 2007

¹⁰⁷ Doskoch 2013

¹⁰⁸ Ghimire 2015

¹⁰⁹ Doskoch 2013

¹¹⁰ Engebretsen and Kabore 2011

¹¹¹ Erulkarr and Muthengi 2003

countries are more likely to be in polygynous relationships. Finally, the most common HIV/AIDS prevention strategies that are advocated – abstinence and condom use – are not realistic options for married girls.¹¹²

5.2.5 Violence

We have seen in section 4.5, that parents often indicate that they marry their girls young to protect them from sexual violence and harassment. Caregivers concerns regarding their daughters safety explains, at least in part, the rise of child marriage rates in humanitarian crises. Again, however, the reality is often found to be otherwise: not only is child marriage increasingly understood as a form of gender based violence in itself, it also often results in domestic and gender based violence. Indeed, girls who marry as children are consistently likely to experience more violence, both verbal and physical, from their husbands than girls who marry later.¹¹³ The violence experienced by child brides doesn't only come from their husbands, as in-laws can also be abusive to girls, especially when the girl does not live up to expectations.¹¹⁴

Girls who are married as children are also highly likely to experience sexual violence and rape, and significantly more so than those married older. In Northern Ethiopia for example, 81% of child brides described their sexual initiation as forced and in India girls are 3 times more likely to be forced to have sex than girls who married later. Child brides often continue to have non-consensual sex throughout their marriage.¹¹⁵ The likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence also increases with a larger age gap between girls and their husbands.¹¹⁶

Such domestic violence is not always considered an issue, as wives are expected to sexually please their husbands and violence is deemed as an acceptable way for a male to maintain the household. This means that violence towards wives is not always seen as an abuse of their rights, with reports showing that 44% of girls aged 15-19 globally believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife in certain circumstances.¹¹⁷ This percentage is higher in Africa and the Middle East. Literature also suggests that this trend goes beyond young girls, with older women and men also condoning such violence.

Alternative viewpoint

In a study in Northern and Western-Central Bangladesh, Schuler and Islam (2008) examined women's acceptance of intimate partner violence. A survey taken in the areas in 2002 suggested that 84% of women believe that husband's use of violence against their wives is acceptable. However, in-depth interviews and focus groups uncovered that although women expect a certain level of violence, and have no control or power over it, they do not condone this violence or view it as a right of husbands. Instead, women called for interventions and punishments against such violence. This calls into question the meaning of survey responses aimed at measuring attitudes towards domestic violence, where women may express their perceptions of prevailing norms rather than personal opinions. Thus although levels of domestic violence are likely to be higher than reported, this violence may not be as condoned as surveys suggest.

¹¹² Clark, Bruce and Dude 2006; IPPF 2006

¹¹³ Care 2012

¹¹⁴ Samuels and Ghimire 2014

¹¹⁵ Erulkarr and Muthengi 2009.

¹¹⁶ Schuler and Islam 2008; CARE 2012; Erulkarr 2013

¹¹⁷ Girls Not Brides 2014

5.2.6 Female genital mutilation

The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) exists in the same context as early marriage in Africa, and the practices share many of the same drivers such as gender inequality and unequal social norms, the desire to control a girl's sexuality and behaviour, religious narratives rationalising the practice, and poverty, where cutting can result in a higher bride price. As well as sharing the same contexts, child marriage and FGM are also more directly linked. Firstly, FGM is often a pre-requisite to marriage and can determine whether or not a girl is able to secure a good marriage. In Ethiopia, for example, mothers often believe that it is essential for girls to be cut if they are to be married due to the perception that uncut girls are considered impure, incomplete or improper. In Sierra Leone, the cutting of a girl is often paid for by her future groom and his family as part of the wedding preparations.¹¹⁸

World Vision has also found a more startling link between FGM and child marriage that has developed from program interventions. In Somalia, parents have received health messages about the dangers of FGM and have moved from infibulations (type three, more extreme FGM) to clitoridectomy (type one FGM). However, this has raised concerns as girls are perceived as now having stronger libidos which, it is perceived, will make them more likely to engage in pre-marital sex. Girls were very aware of this and so many chose to marry young in order to disprove these perceptions and prove and uphold their respectability and value. It was also found after the Tostan program in Senegal, where communities had publicly abandoned both FGM and child marriage, that parents believed their uncircumcised daughters to have looser morals and feared they would engage in pre-marital sex.¹¹⁹ **This link was only highlighted in one report (World Vision 2014), which states the need to investigate the link further and be wary of such unintended consequences and link programs to tackle FGM and child marriage.**

6. Child Marriage and Education

The above two sections depict the different relationships between education and child marriage, where a lack of education is considered both a cause and consequence of child marriage. This section will explore the relationship further.

6.1 Educational enrolment rates

There has been a global commitment to improving access to education and achieving universal primary education since 2000, with the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All Goals established at the World Education Forum. The goals sought to ensure universal enrolment in primary education. This means that educational enrolment has been well studied, especially at primary level.

According to the 2015 Education For All Figures Global Monitoring Report, global primary school net enrolment ratios¹²⁰ will have reached 93% in 2015. However, 58 million children remained out of school in 2012 and progress in reducing this number has stalled. Furthermore, drop-out rates continue to be a major issue, where at least 20% of children enrolled in primary school are not expected to reach the final grade, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This means that one in six children in low and middle income countries will not complete primary education.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ World Vision 2014

¹¹⁹ World Vision 2014

¹²⁰ Net enrolment refers to the number of children enrolled who belong in the officially recognised primary-education age group

¹²¹ UNESCO 2015

Lower secondary education levels have also increased to a global gross¹²² enrolment ratio of 85% in 2012. Indeed, many countries have legislated for free lower secondary education. However, inequality is rife at the lower secondary level, with those from poorer backgrounds less likely to attend secondary school.¹²³

The literature pays significantly less attention to secondary and tertiary levels, especially upper secondary and university level enrolment.

Importantly, as table 4 demonstrates, gender parity is increasing in education, and existing literature on child marriage and education does not yet take into account these changing circumstances and the impact of this on child marriage.

6.2 Attendance and participation of girls

Achieving gender parity in education was also one of the MDGs and EFA goals. The MDGs prescribed that gender parity in primary school enrolment should be achieved in 2005. This target was missed, and an estimated 69% of countries will have achieved gender parity by 2015. Gender disparities in secondary education are even greater, with only 48% of countries achieving gender parity by 2015. This means that only 43% of countries will have achieved gender parity in enrolment for both primary and secondary education by 2015. Despite these poor results, it is highlighted that the last 15 years have seen significantly accelerated progress in achieving gender parity.¹²⁴

Once enrolled in primary school, reports suggest that girls in general stand an equal chance of continuing to the higher grades of primary school. Girls have a higher chance of continuing onto these levels than boys in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Tanzania, where boys are at higher risk of dropping out.¹²⁵

In secondary education, gender disparity is wider and more varied between and within countries **but is under-researched**. It is noted, however, that countries which have seen progress towards parity in lower secondary education, have achieved this by reducing disparity in primary education attainment.¹²⁶

6.3 Reasons for lower enrolment of girls in education

The reasoning for lower enrolment of girls in education can broadly be summed up under gender roles in society, the costs of education, security of girls in and on the way to school and taboos related to, or traditional practices at the time of, menstruation.

6.3.1 Gendered roles in society

Gender roles have been discussed in section 4.1. Due to gender norms and roles, there is the perception that men will be the income earners and women will take on domestic roles within their husband's house. This means that, especially when a family is struggling financially, parents are far more likely to send their sons to school than their daughters. This is firstly because the boy child is more likely to go on and generate an income. Secondly, it is because families believe their daughter will eventually marry and take on domestic duties anyway, and therefore investing in her education

¹²² Gross enrolment refers to the number of children enrolled, regardless of age.

¹²³ UNESCO 2015

¹²⁴ UNESCO 2015

¹²⁵ UNESCO 2015

¹²⁶ UNESCO 2015

isn't considered worthwhile. Finally, many families believe that if their daughter does go on to earn, this money will end up in the hands of her husband's family rather than their own. This results in the perception that families will get no return for their investment in their daughter's education. Conversely, traditionally sons stay at home and so the parents are able to reap the benefits of their income.¹²⁷

Gendered roles can also affect educational enrolment as girls are expected to carry out household duties when they return from school, or feel pressured to carry out household duties instead of going to school. This results in girls missing lessons and/or not having enough time to complete homework resulting in poor results and girls struggling to attain the results they need to progress onto the next grade.¹²⁸

6.3.2. Costs of education

Education comes with significant costs which in some families can bar children from participation. Due to the above, it is especially likely to bar girls as parents will favour the education of their sons.

These costs can be both direct and indirect. Direct costs include fees (however primary education and lower secondary education tends to be free) and the hidden costs of transportation, uniform and learning materials such as books and pens. Indirect costs include the fact that families lose out on help around the home, on the land or in other income earning positions.¹²⁹

It is worth noting here that in some countries in Africa, most notably Uganda, it is not uncommon for girls to engage in transactional sexual relationships with "sugar daddies" as a means of paying for the high costs of school fees and school resources. What is more, some parents are complicit in encouraging their girls to have transactional sex in order to pay for school costs. Sugar daddies usually give girls money for sex, but it is also common for teachers to be sugar daddies, offering girls good grades and study assistance, and for girls to have sex with boda-boda men in exchange for transportation to school.¹³⁰

This notion of "transactional sex", it should be added, is nuanced and problematized by a growing body of literature which highlights that the term can mean different things to different people. Shefer et. al. (2010) carried out a study in a South African University and found that transactional sexual relationships are not just about money, but also "involve a range of material and emotional transactions that can confer benefits on both men and women" (p.443). Amongst the student participants, a continuum of relationships were identified, where the boundaries were blurred between transactional relationships and "normal" intimate relationships. Shefer et. al. argue that women are not always passive victims in transactional relationships, and this is echoed by a study in Maputo, Mozambique where women viewed exercising their sexuality "as a form of power to extract wealth from men" (Karlyn 2005, p. 285).

Stoebenau et. al. (2011) also found that transactional relationships do not necessarily involve sex. In South Africa, female participants discussed that women who *kura* a man (seduce him in order to get food, alcohol money etc.) can avoid having sex with him by running away or dumping him. However participants highlighted that this is difficult and rare, not least due to the threat of violence that may

¹²⁷ Eloundou-Enyegue and Calves 2006

¹²⁸ Brown 2012; Bantebya, Muhanguzi and Watson 2014

¹²⁹ Brown 2012

¹³⁰ Jones and Norton 2007

result. The study also found that in Madagascar, girls can flirtatiously persuade a man to buy her desired items and that this does not necessarily require a sexual exchange.

This literature therefore highlights that the meaning and practice of “transactional sex” cannot be understood in a straightforward, singular way.

6.3.3 Security of girls

Girls are often not sent to school because parents fear for their safety and security. This is the case as schools can be unsafe environments for girls, where they can face sexual harassment within the institution. In rural areas especially, girls are also kept from school due to the long and dangerous walk they would have to make to school, where they can be at risk of abduction and rape.¹³¹ The threat of sexual harassment or violence occurring is deemed worse given the shame this brings on the family, as demonstrated in section 4.4. Parents are also reported to be fearful of the unsupervised mix of boys and girls in the school which they perceive can result in pre-marital relationships and sexual relationships which would, again, bring shame to the family.¹³²

6.3.4 Menstruation

Girls may also not be able to go to school due to unsuitable sanitary conditions or traditional practices and taboos around menstruation. Many schools, for example, do not have single sex toilets or appropriate facilities for girls who are menstruating.¹³³ Furthermore, in some countries, such as Nepal, traditional practices include forbidding girls to touch water and food and dictate the isolation of girls from others during menstruation (although many girls defy this).¹³⁴ A lack of sanitary facilities and traditional practices surrounding menstruation can result in girls missing substantial periods of schooling which can affect their grades and/or lead them to drop out of education when they reach the age of menarche. In Uganda, there are also taboos around girls menstruating in their natal home. This taboo means that girls marry young and therefore tend not to go to school when they start to menstruate.¹³⁵

6.3.5 Lack of employment opportunities

A lack of employment opportunities was discussed in section 4.7. If girls will not be able to enter the workforce after finishing school, there is a lack of incentive for parents to send their daughters to school as there is no obvious reward in doing so.

6.4 Relationship between education and child marriage

It is clear through-out the literature that there is a strong relationship between child marriage and education, with figure 2 depicting the relationship between higher levels of education and lower prevalence of child marriage. This relationship is especially obvious at secondary level, where rates of child marriage drastically decrease with secondary school attendance. A lack of education is therefore seen as a major cause of child marriage and an increased level of education lessens the likelihood of a girl being married young. At the same time, child marriage causes girls to drop out of

¹³¹ Parks 2013; Brown 2012

¹³² Adolwa 2012

¹³³ Brown 2012; UNESCO 2015; Parks 2013; UNFPA 2014; Samuels and Ghimire 2014

¹³⁴ Samuels and Ghimire 2014

¹³⁵ Bantebya, Muhanguzi and Watson 2014

education, as examined in section 5.1, suggesting that child marriage also has an effect on lower levels of education.

Despite there being a very significant relationship between child marriage and education, it is not clear in the literature what causes the relationship and how education itself affects these rates. In other words, it is not evident whether educating girls directly lessens the likelihood of them marrying young, or whether independent variables cause this relationship.

Some reports argue that educating girls can have a direct effect on whether they will marry young. This is because educated girls are deemed to be more empowered to speak out and protect their and others rights, have better negotiating skills which enable them to negotiate their marriage with their parents and are often more knowledgeable about the harms caused by early marriage and can use this knowledge in their negotiations. Various scholars suggest that educated girls are also often listened to and respected more, aiding their negotiations with their parents, and indeed their parents-in-law with regards to childbirth if they are married.¹³⁶ Finally, authors of the UNFPA report (2012) report that education is seen to prevent girls getting married because being in school reinforces the notion that girls are children and thus not of a suitable age to marry.¹³⁷

It can be argued that there are a number of independent variables that may explain the relationship between education and the prevalence of child marriage. Girls in education may come from families with higher household wealth, meaning they have the financial resources to send their girls to school and also that the (economic) incentives for marrying their daughters at a young age are not so important.¹³⁸ Girls in school may also be in a setting where there are more opportunities available to them, both in terms of educational opportunities, and opportunities for work after school.¹³⁹ This means there are alternatives to child marriage available, and incentives to send girls to school. Another possible argument is that girls who are in school may have parents who value girls differently; they may send their girls to school as they view the intrinsic value or the right of a girl's education and simultaneously may believe that a girl's future should be invested in, rather than her being married young.

There is limited research as to which of these direct or indirect factors are most important in determining the relationship between education and child marriage. There is a gap, for example, in research exploring what is taught about child marriage in schools, the role that teachers play and information as to why some parents keep their daughters in school, whilst others pull them out for marriage or domestic work. Research into these areas would be useful to determine the most effective interventions and working out how to change the attitude and behaviour of parents.

Seeking to address the knowledge gap in the role played by formal education in preventing child marriage and shaping girls perceptions on the issue, Denecli (2015) conducted a small-scale qualitative study into child marriage and formal education in the Amhara region of Ethiopia for her MA degree at the University of Amsterdam. The research found that girls aged 12-18 differ in the extent of their understanding of the personal and societal effects of child marriage and that this difference is primarily caused by participation in formal education. This is because girls engaged in formal education receive sexuality education in the curriculum and in extra-curricular SRH/Girl's clubs. Being part of the school system means girls learn about early marriage, have the opportunity to discuss SRH issues and can prevent their marriage with the support of their school. Girls in school

¹³⁶ Lindstrom, Kiros and Hogan 2009; Yarrow et. al. 2015; UNFPA 2012

¹³⁷ UNFPA 2012

¹³⁸ For a discussion of the economic incentives, see: Pereznieto and Tefera 2014; Yarrow et. al. 2015; Plan International 2015; Eloundou-Enyegue and Calves 2006; Bajracharya and Amin 2012

¹³⁹ For a discussion of the effect of a lack of opportunities, see: UNFPA 2012; Yarrow 2015; Edmeades and Hayes 2014

thus appeared to have more extensive knowledge of the harms of early marriage, viewing it as a preventable occurrence that should be fought. Girls out of school, on the other hand, largely appeared to gain their information on child marriage from observations and family members. Out-of-school-girls indicated that they consider early marriage to be their destiny, and that they are fearful of this destiny. It is important to note that this research took place in schools where program interventions to tackle child marriage were taking place.¹⁴⁰

6.5 Country specific information

The statistical information in the below table is taken from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (Available at <http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/BrowseEducation.aspx>) It includes the most up-to-date figures per country. These tend to be from 2011 onwards.

With regards to gender parity in education, the 2015 Education for All Global Monitoring Report states that an “analysis of education sector plans in 30 countries [...] found that countries that included a gender goal in their plans in both 2000 and 2012 made substantial gains towards gender parity in primary enrolment. Such countries include Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Sierra Leone. In the Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal, girls’ enrolment rose during this period to over half of total primary enrolment, effectively reversing the gender gap” (UNESCO 2015, p. 166).¹⁴¹

The information on girl-friendly schools was obtained through the mentioned organisations’ websites and child protection policies were found in UNICEF annual country reports or through governmental pages.

¹⁴⁰ Deneçli 2015

¹⁴¹ UNESCO 2015, p. 166

Table 4 - Country specific information on education

Country	Net intake into primary education		Primary gross graduation ratio		Transition rate from primary to secondary		Lower Secondary gross graduation ratio		Girl Friendly Schools Policies	Child Protection Policies
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Bangladesh	92	92	55	66	-	-	45	52		National Children Policy 2011
Benin	61	52	70	60	85	86	40	24		Code de L'Enfant 2014
Burkina Faso	30	28	75	82*	71	67	40	37*	PLAN USA has implemented BRIGHT (Burkinabé Response to Improve Girls' Chances to Succeed). The programme focused on the 10 provinces with the lowest levels of girls' education. It built 132 girl-friendly complexes, strengthened local partners' capacities and mobilised local communities. It also incorporated food programs and literacy programs for adults, especially mothers of students. ¹⁴²	Child Protection mapping and assessment 2014

¹⁴² See <https://www.planusa.org/burkina-faso-burkinab%C3%A9-response-to-improve-girls%E2%80%99-chances-to-succeed-i-ii>

Ethiopia	80	75	34	33	100	97	29	24	The United Nations Girls Education Initiative is creating child-friendly schools to promote girls education at primary level. ¹⁴³	
Ghana	38*	39	104	71	98	99	80	76	Many programs have set up girl-friendly schools in Ghana, including IBIS Ghana, Women’s Initiative for Self-Empowerment and Plan Ghana. The latter also extend their focus to gender-friendly, libraries, toilet blocks and play facilities. ¹⁴⁴	Child and Family Welfare Policy
Mali	21	16	40	28	94	92	27	20	UNICEF is running a girl friendly school programme in the Segou Region, providing a safe and gender-sensitive learning environment with improved sanitation. The schools also engage parents and the community through education committees, mothers’ associations and functional literacy classes for adults. ¹⁴⁵	National Child Protection Policy and Plan 2015

¹⁴³ See http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/ethiopia_139.html

¹⁴⁴ <https://plan-international.org/ghana-education>

¹⁴⁵ http://www.unicef.org/mdg/mali_59595.html

Nepal	89	093	98	107	88	86	75	82	UNICEF and the Nepalese Department for Education have set up model child, gender and disability-friendly school programs throughout the country. The Department of Education has also focused efforts on sanitation and WASH facilities in schools. ¹⁴⁶	Child Protection Implementation Plan 2014. Government Child Protection Officer in all districts.
Pakistan	-	-	64	53	82	80	52	38	UNICEF has supported the Child-Friendly Schools Project in Punjab. The schools are “inclusive and sensitive to gender and social norms” and include teacher training and community mobilisation to provide quality education with limited resources. ¹⁴⁷	Provincial. Including the Child Protection Act 2013 in
Senegal	26	28	21	23	94	92	27	24	UNICEF and UNGEI, in partnership with local organisations and the Ministry of Education have set up girl-friendly schools in Senegal. These schools are free from violence, have sanitation facilities and provide food and drink to students. Ndiarème B is flagged up as model school in Senegal, and the UNGEI program was launched here by Kofi Annan. ¹⁴⁸	National Child Protection Strategy 2013

¹⁴⁶ http://www.unicef.org/education/nepal_48811.html

¹⁴⁷ http://www.unicef.org/pakistan/overview_5070.htm

¹⁴⁸ http://www.ungei.org/gaproject/senegal_333.html; http://www.unicef.org/education/senegal_26018.html

Sierra Leone	72	70	-	-	88	88	-	-	Plan International, alongside International Rescue Committee and Forum for African Women Educationalists are running a program to support marginalised girls to complete basic education with improved learning outcomes in rural areas. This involves “improving girl-friendly and inclusive learning environments”, including training female educators. The program specifically focuses on disabled girls. ¹⁴⁹	Child Welfare Policy 2013 Child Justice Strategy 2013
Uganda	70	66	57	55	64	60	-	-	The Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sport and UNICEF worked together to develop a “Child-Friendly Checklist” determining for teachers and inspectors what child-friendly schools look like. This includes gender sensitivity (including appropriate sanitation facilities), a safe environment and community support. This led to the setting up of child/girl-friendly schools. UNICEF also set up girl-friendly WASH facilities and learning centres in IDP camps (UNICEF 2010). ¹⁵⁰	The Children’s Amendment Bill (withdrawn 2015)

* Burkina Faso’s primary gross completion ratio for girls was 36% in 2012 and secondary gross completion ratio was 8% in 2012. This significant change may be a result of the government’s education plan for 2001–2010, which put in place strategies to strengthen the Directorate for the Promotion of Girls’ Education, part of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (UNESCO 2015)

¹⁴⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415489/GEC-Project-Profile-booklet-March2015.pdf

¹⁵⁰ http://www.unicef.org/uganda/CFS_Uganda_Case_Study_January_2010.pdf

7. Laws Relating to Child Marriage

7.1 International laws

The literature on child marriage highlights many international laws that have relevance to child marriage, either directly or indirectly. These are laid out in the table 5 below:

Table 5 – International laws relating to child marriage

Legal Framework	Year	Link to child marriage	Countries	Notes
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	1948	Article 16 states that “men and women of full age” have the right to marry and that “marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses”	Global	
The UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage	1962	States that marriage must be consented to by both spouses and calls on states to set minimum marriage age laws and registration processes.	Ratified by 55 states, including Bangladesh, Benin Burkina Faso and Mali. The remaining 7 project countries have not signed or ratified the treaty	Bangladesh has a reservation that allows the state to apply personal laws of religious communities, meaning the legal minimum age can be exempted. Many believe this reservation is incompatible with the purpose of the convention.

<p>Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)</p>	<p>1979</p>	<p>Article 16.2 states “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”</p> <p>Article 16.1 states that women have the “right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent” and declares that women have equal rights to men in marriage.</p>	<p>189 state parties including all 11 project countries</p>	<p>Bangladesh exempted itself from a clause stating women have “the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution” as they conflict with Sharia Law</p>
<p>The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</p>	<p>1989</p>	<p>Defines childhood as those under 18</p> <p>Article 24(3) states that “Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.”</p> <p>Article 34 declares that states will “protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse”.</p>	<p>Global</p>	<p>Although child marriage is not explicitly mentioned, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors the implementation of the convention has stated that early marriage is a harmful practice that negatively affect sexual and reproductive health and has called on states to set a minimum age of marriage at 18¹⁵¹</p>
<p>African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</p>	<p>1999</p>	<p>Article 21(2) states “Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory.”</p>	<p>African states. Ratified by 41, including all African project countries, and signed by 9.</p>	

¹⁵¹ Equality Now 2014

The Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	2005	Article 6 declares that “no marriage shall take place without the free and full consent of both parties” and “the minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years”. It also states that all marriages will be registered and lays out the rights of a woman in marriage, including the right to own property.	African states. Ratified by 36 states and signed by 15. All African project countries have ratified the protocol, except Ethiopia and Sierra Leone who have signed but not ratified.
Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)	2011	Article 37 states that “Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of forcing an adult or a child to enter into a marriage is criminalised” and states that parties will criminalise the act of luring someone to another state for the purpose of forced marriage.	Europe
UN Human Rights Council Resolution on Child Marriage	2013	Recognises child marriage as an abuse of human rights and calls for a panel discussion and report on the issue.	Global This resolution is significant as it shifted child marriage from a development issue to a human rights issue.
UN General Assembly Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (Res 69/156)	2014	Recognises child marriage as an abuse of human rights and a threat to girls' health, education, economic and social status, which is caused by unequal gender norms and perpetuates poverty. It agrees steps to addressing the problem including enforcing laws, coordinating responses and protecting the rights of girls.	Global

UN Human Rights Council Resolution strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage (Res 29/8)	2015	Recognises child marriage as an abuse of rights and calls on states to act to tackle the practice through methods including enforcing laws, removing laws that free perpetrators from prosecution of sexual violence if they marry, engaging civil society, registering births, ensuring girls safety and addressing poverty	Global
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7.3 National laws relating to child marriage

Table 6 – National laws relating to child marriage and GBV.

Country	Laws relating to child marriage	Religious/customary laws	Laws relating to domestic/sexual violence
Bangladesh	<p>Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 Minimum statutory age for marriage is 18 for girls and 21 for boys. Any adult arranging, performing or ‘contracting’ a child marriage can be convicted of an offence, with a penalty of one month imprisonment or a fine. Parents can be convicted if they permit or ‘negligently’ fail to prevent their child from being married. If an impending child marriage is brought to a court’s notice, it can be prevented through an injunctive</p> <p>Birth and Death Registration Act 2004 – Mandatory for bride and groom to have birth certificate</p> <p>Dowry Prohibition Act 1980 – Prohibits dowry, defined as any property or security given as consideration for the marriage</p> <p>Draft Child Marriage Restraint Act 2014 - Cabinet of Bangladesh approved language to lower the minimum age of marriage from 18 to 16 years for girls</p>	<p>Personal Laws are legally recognised, however juries have started to give verdicts on personal laws in favour of the rights of women.</p> <p>Muslim Sharia Law and Hindu Shastric Law permit marriage from puberty.</p>	<p>The Prevention of Cruelty against Women and Children Act 2000 – punishment for rape, acid throwing and instigating to commit suicide and death because of pressure for dowry</p> <p>The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 – criminalises domestic violence, defined as “physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse or economic abuse”. Critics note that it does not specifically outlaw marital rape.</p>

Benin

Code des personnes et de la famille 2004 – Declares each spouse, even if a minor, must consent to marriage.
A person under 18 cannot be married, unless with the consent of a parent.
Parents can apply to a judge if they believe refusal to give consent does not comply with the best interests of the minor.
Under 18s cannot marry unless granted an age order by the courts.
States bride money has symbolic significance
Abolishes marriage by levirate

Le Code de L’Enfant au Bénin 2007 – sets legal age of marriage for boys and girls is 18 unless an exemption is granted on grounds of age by legal process

Prévention et répression des violences faites aux femmes 2011 – defines forced marriage as marriage without free and full consent with prison sentences for those who carry out and plan marriage.

FGM Prohibited

Customary law no longer recognised by courts but still effect women.

Coutumier du Dahomey 1931 – treats women as legal minors, gives them limited rights in marriage and inheritance and sets legal age of marriage for girls at 14-15 and boys 18-20.

Mandel Decree 1939 – Marriageable age 14 for girls, 16 for boys.

Tradition of bride abductions where girl is raped and traditional law of levirate where wife is considered property of husband is compelled to marry his relative on his death (although this was outlawed)

Act No. 2011-26 on the Prevention and Repression of Violence Against Women – explicitly prohibits spousal rape with jail sentences

Penal Code – Prohibits domestic violence and sexual harassment with jail sentences, including for those who know harassment is taking place but do not report it.

<p>Burkina Faso</p>	<p>Individual and Family Code 1990 – prohibits dowry and declares marriage requires consent of spouses. Judge can annul marriage if consent was secured with physical or moral coercion. Prohibits levirate.</p> <p>Code of Persons and Family 1989 – Minimum age of marriage 17 for girls and 20 for boys, unless exemption is granted, but not below 15 for girls or 18 for boys.</p> <p>Penal Code – forced marriages are prohibited and punishable by imprisonment, including of the person who arranged the marriage. Maximum fine given if spouse is under 13.</p> <p>Underage marriage is considered forced marriage</p> <p>Birth certificate or declaration of age is required prior to marriage</p>	<p>Individual and Family Code 1990 declares that religious and customary laws have no legal affect</p>	<p>Penal Code prohibits Female Genital Mutilation and other forms of violence but there are no specific laws regarding domestic or sexual violence</p>
<p>Ethiopia</p>	<p>Family Code – Minimum age of marriage 18 Prohibits forced marriage, regardless of traditional/religious ceremonies</p> <p>Criminal Code 2005 – prohibits early marriage with imprisonment Prohibits forced marriage, regardless of traditional/religious ceremonies</p> <p>Constitutional right for women to freely enter into marriage and chose spouse.</p>	<p>Fetha Negest states minimum age of marriage to be 12 for females and 20 for males.</p> <p>Sharia Law dictates girls should be are ready to marry by the age of puberty (some suggest this is considered as 9 for females)</p>	<p>Criminal Code 2005 - sanctions violence against women such as FGM, early marriage, abduction and domestic violence</p>

<p>Ghana</p>	<p>Children’s Act 1998 – Sets minimum age of marriage at 18, stating that “no person shall force a child to be betrothed; to be the subject of a dowry transaction; or to be married.” Before this age. However marriage can be at 16 with consent of the parents.</p> <p>Criminal Code Amendment Act 1998 (Act 544) outlawed harmful traditional practices including trokosi and FGM</p> <p>Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law 1991</p>	<p>Majority of women are married under customary law</p> <p>In Northern Ghana the husband performs bride-service for the girl’s parents or starts paying the bride price from when the girl is as young as five years old. Girls are then unable to refuse marriage when she comes of age.</p> <p>Marriage Ordinance condones polygamy</p> <p>Land Tenure and property rights governed by customary law which place men in charge</p>	<p>Law against Female Genital Mutilation and Harmful Traditional Widowhood Practices</p> <p>Article 26(2) of Ghana’s 1992 Constitution prohibits all customary practices that dehumanise or are injurious to the physical and mental well-being of a person including FGM</p>
<p>Mali</p>	<p>Code of Persons and the Family 2011 – Sets the minimum age of marriage at 16 for females and 18 for males. However children can be married at 15 if parents appeal in the courts Sets dowry at token sum of 15,000 CFA francs (23 euro)</p> <p>Civil Code – Marriage can only be entered into with free and full consent and this consent is a condition of validity</p> <p>Marriage and Guardianship Code – Those who carry out marriages without consent can be imprisoned.</p> <p>An officer of the Civil Registry who conducts an early marriage can be imprisoned</p>	<p>Customary marriages are not legally recognised but are commonplace</p> <p>Levirate and sororate marriages are custom, as is a starvation diet before marriage.</p>	<p>There are no laws on domestic violence and so such violence is prosecuted under the penal code covering assault, injury, rape etc.</p>

<p>Nepal</p>	<p>Gender Equality Act - sets minimum age of marriage at 20 without parental consent and 18 with parental consent</p>	<p>Gender Equality Act 2006 – perpetrator of rape must compensate for mental and physical damage.</p> <p>Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act 2009 – Makes punishable domestic violence, defined as “any form of physical, mental, sexual and economic harm”</p> <p>Criminal law has been amended to punish rape, including marital rape and sexual harassment.</p>
<p>Pakistan</p>	<p>Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 – Minimum age of marriage 16 for girls and 18 for boys. Imposes penalties on persons who arrange a child marriage and parents who negligently fail to prevent their child being married but the 18th Constitutional Amendment 2010 devolved issues of child marriage to provinces. National law still applicable in Balochistan, KP, FATA and the Islamabad Capital Territory.</p> <p>Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013 – Sindh was first province to pass law amending national child restraint act. Sets minimum age at 18 for boys and girls. Parents, brides and grooms can face 3 years imprisonment or a fine</p> <p>The Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act 2011 – Prohibits exchange marriages, forced marriage and marriage to the Quran</p>	<p>Zina and Haddood Ordinances 1979 (Islamic Law) girl can lawfully marry at 16 or at puberty.</p> <p>The Council of Islamic Ideology announced a girl is ready for marriage as soon as she reaches puberty. In 2014 the council also ruled that banning such unions was anti-Islamic.</p> <p>Pakistan Penal Code – deals with almost all forms of violence, regardless of gender. No specific section on violence in the family.</p> <p>Hudood Ordinances – Relate to sexual violence, but critics believe the law protects the perpetrators of violence. Rape can only be prosecuted if there were four Muslim adult male witnesses or the accused confesses. If a woman accuses someone of rape and cannot satisfy these requirements she may be prosecuted for illicit consensual sex.</p>

<p>Senegal</p>	<p>2nd periodic report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child 2006 Sets minimum age of marriage at 16 for girls and 18 for boys. However exemption can be granted President of the Regional Court.</p> <p>Family Code – States that “each of the future spouses, even minors, must personally consent to the marriage” absence of free consent is grounds for annulling the marriage</p> <p>The Constitution – prohibits forced marriage</p>	<p>Harmful traditional practices found mainly in social norms rather than laws or regulations.</p>	<p>Criminal Code - criminalizes, assault and battery, sexual harassment, marital violence, female genital mutilation, rape, indecent assault, procuring etc.</p>
<p>Sierra Leone</p>	<p>Child Right Act 2007 – Sets minimum age of marriage at 18, including for customary marriages</p> <p>Legally consent is required</p> <p>Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2007 – Requires the registration of customary marriages up to 6 months after the marriage</p>	<p>Marriages contracted under general, customary and religious law are legal – but now must be registered.</p> <p>Under customary law, consent of a female was not required if her suitor was and influential leader, only the males consent was legally required. This has changed and girls consent is now also needed.</p> <p>No minimum age for marriage under customary law, just requires consent of both parents.</p> <p>Customary law shows women to be inferior to men and often traditional rulings are in the man’s favour.</p>	<p>Domestic Violence Act 2007 – Criminalises physical and sexual violence, including marital rape, economic abuse, and emotional, verbal and psychological.</p>

<p>Uganda</p>	<p>1995 Constitution – sets minimum age of marriage at 18, gives equal rights to males and females in marriage and dissolution and requires free and informed consent. Legislates for registration of marriages</p> <p>The Children Act 1997 states “It shall be unlawful to subject a child to social or customary practices that are harmful to the child’s health”, although does not specify these.</p>	<p>Marriages governed by different religious and customary laws</p> <p>Bride Price frequently practiced, although Supreme Court banned practice of refunding bride price in dissolution of marriage</p>	<p>Domestic Violence Act 2010 – criminalises domestic violence, including acts which includes physical, sexual, verbal, psychological and economic abuse and harasses or threatens.</p>
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Information obtained from CEDAW country reports or legal documents.

7.3 Trends in laws relating to child marriage

Despite the fact that governments who have ratified international treaties are bound to them, and despite national laws prohibiting the practice, child marriage rates continue to persist and laws are often not enforced. International legal frameworks are often difficult to enforce regardless of the topic due to a lack of mechanisms and the literature makes little reference to this lack of international law enforcement, perhaps because it is such a universal and complex issue. The literature, especially organisational and advocacy literature, however, makes frequent reference to the fact that where national laws against child marriage exist, they are often not adhered to. Several explanations are given for this.

Firstly, in some cases, families and especially young girls are unaware of the laws surrounding the age of marriage, which means that girls can be unaware that their rights are being violated when they are married as children and are unaware of the legal mechanisms that are supposed to protect them.¹⁵² The fact that national legislation on child marriage also frequently clashes with religious laws and traditional customs makes laws on child marriage more difficult to understand and enforce.¹⁵³ Islamic law in countries, for example, states that a girl is ready for marriage when she hits puberty – often this age is unstated and is dependent on physical factors such as age of menarche. In some countries, governments tolerate these customary or religious laws, or explicitly permit them in law.¹⁵⁴ This is exemplified above where, although Bangladesh ratified the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, it reserved the right to be exempt from upholding a national minimum age of marriage when this contravened existing religious laws. Many countries also have loopholes and get-out clauses that allow marriage to take place below the minimum legal age with parental consent or with a court order. World Policy Analysis Centre (2015) finds that despite 88% of countries now having a legal age of marriage of at least 18, such loopholes and religious laws mean in reality 58% of countries allow marriage before 18, and 31% allow marriage at 15.

Religious and customary marriages may take place without any legal registration process which also makes enforcement of laws against child marriages difficult. Such marriages, although not legally registered, are still considered binding in the community and impose the same obligations onto spouses.¹⁵⁵

Enforcement is also an issue as births frequently aren't registered and therefore age cannot be determined, meaning that the law cannot protect these young people. This is the reason that many initiatives and legal frameworks advocate for birth registration.¹⁵⁶ Registration documents are also forged by religious leaders conducting ceremonies to show the girl to be at a legal age of marriage. This may occur in countries where registration documents are legally required for a wedding to take place and especially occurs in instances of pre-marital pregnancy.¹⁵⁷

Enforcing laws against child marriage is especially difficult in rural areas, where officials cover large geographical areas, but don't have the ability to get around and intervene when they receive knowledge of the practice happening.¹⁵⁸ This suggests that civil society can play a key role in enforcing child marriage laws. More generally, law enforcement is difficult where there is not an adequate judicial system or the political will.

¹⁵² Centre for Reproductive Rights 2013; Equality Now 2015; Marcus and Brodbeck 2015b; Plan 2013

¹⁵³ Maswikwa et al 2015; Centre for Reproductive Rights 2013; Equality Now 2015; Marcus and Brodbeck 2015b; Plan 2013

¹⁵⁴ Equality Now 2015

¹⁵⁵ Maswikwa et al 2015; Centre for Reproductive Rights 2013; Equality Now 2015; Marcus and Brodbeck 2015b; Plan 2013

¹⁵⁶ Equality Now 2014; ICRW 2015; Civil Society of Pakistan 2009

¹⁵⁷ Buescher 2012; UNFOA 2012

¹⁵⁸ Marcus and Brodbeck 2015b

Despite this current general lack of enforcement, organisations working in the area believe and have found that the law can be a useful tool in tackling child marriage and changing gender norms more generally and many strategies advocate for creating an enabling legal system. Law reform is found to be most effective when it builds on changes in behaviour and attitudes that are already starting to occur and if there is widespread awareness of these new laws (often achieved through information campaigns) and confidence in them being enforced.¹⁵⁹ Law as a strategy for combatting child marriage is further examined in section 9.

8. Organisations and Actors working on child marriage

8.1 International actors

There are many international organisations working on child marriage. Those heavily featured in the literature are in table 7 below (in alphabetical order).

Table 7 – International organisations

Organisation	Summary of project	Website
CARE	Runs programmes from national offices to work towards gender equality, woman’s empowerment and creating champions amongst boys and men	http://care.org/work/womens-empowerment/child-marriage
Equality Now	International organisation advocating for rights of women and girls globally by raising international visibility of individual cases of abuse, mobilising public support and pressuring governments to enact or enforce laws.	www.equalitynow.org/
Every Woman Every Child	Mobilises international and national action by governments, the UN, multilaterals, the private sector and civil society to address the health challenges facing women, adolescents and children.	http://www.everywomaneverychild.org/
Ford Foundation	Private foundation working to tackle global inequality by providing grants. Works in child marriage under its gender, racial and ethnic justice arm	www.fordfoundation.org
Girls Not Brides	Global Partnership of civil society organisations working to combat child marriage and enable girls to reach their full potential	www.girlsnotbrides.org
International Centre for Research on Women	International Research organisation which seeks to empower women to control their lives and shape their communities through designing plans for program designers, donors and policymakers, measuring impacts and recommending policy priorities	www.icrw.org

¹⁵⁹ Marcus and Brodbeck 2015b; Centre for Reproductive Rights 2013; Equality Now 2014

Overseas Development Institute	UK based research organisation carrying out research on child marriage for UNICEF, The UK Department for International Development etc.	www.odi.org
Pathfinder International	Champion sexual and reproductive health rights worldwide	www.pathfinder.org
PLAN International	“Plan International’s <i>Because I am a Girl</i> campaign works at local, national and international levels to enable millions of girls to avoid early and forced marriage, stay in school and benefit from a quality education.”	www.plan-international.org/child-marriage#support
Population Council	Carries out research and directs policy attention to child marriage. Country-based projects are finding the most effective way to end child marriage and support married girls. Projects offer families the resources and options they need to delay marriage and support married girls by addressing their isolation and health information needs.	www.popcouncil.org/research/child-marriage-prevention-and-supporting-married-girls
Save the Children	Save the Children fight for child rights. Research, advocate and run child marriage projects in project countries.	www.savethechildren.net
South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC)	Forum of South Asian governments and civil society organisations set up to tackle violence against children In Asia. Child marriage is one of its core thematic areas	www.saievac.org/our-work-2/thematic-areas/early-marriage-em/
UNFPA	“Works with governments and civil society partners, at all levels, to promote and protect the human rights of girls, including assisting with the development of policies, programmes and legislation to address and curtail the practice of child marriage. Many of these efforts, such as the Action for Adolescent Girls programme, empower girls to know their human rights, including their right to choose, as adults, whom to marry”	http://www.unfpa.org/child-marriage#
UNICEF	Uses its position of working with both grassroots organisation and high level decision makers, as well as its mandate to provide data and evidence on child marriage and its broad field-based programming to identify and address some of the root causes. Reports and advises frequently on child marriage	http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html

UN Women	UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment	www.unwomen.org
World Health Organisation	Directs and coordinates international health within the United Nations' system	www.who.int
World Vision	International charity running an End Child Marriage campaign of advocacy and action	www.worldvision.org/about-us

8.2 National actors

As indicated earlier, the Her Choice Alliance is composed of Stichting Kinderpostzegels (SKN), The Hunger Project (THP), International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) and the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR). SKN, THP and ICDI have either national offices or partner organisations working in the project countries. These organisations are identified below, alongside country partners in the Girls Not Brides network and initiatives combatting child marriage run by government departments. This information is primarily derived from the *Her Choice Programme* document and from the Girls Not Brides country profile websites.¹⁶⁰

8.2.1 Bangladesh

8.2.1a Partner organisations

ICDI

DALIT has been selected as a new partner. DALIT works at grassroot-level with Dalits, the lowest positioned social group which has a much higher rate of child marriage than the country average. The programme will mainly be conducted in Khulna Division in two neighbouring districts (Satkhra and Bagerhat) in the south-west of the country. The programme places engaging with boys and men high on the agenda.

THP

THP works in districts in the Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Mymensing, Sasjhahi, Rangpur, and Sylhet Divisions. It works at the Union level, which is the smallest rural government unit. The programs use local government and volunteer co-operation to reach the SDG goals. Volunteers (animators) attend training which they then use to mobilise the community towards self-reliance and intervene in harmful practices. According to personal communications with THP, this has already been successful in stopping child marriages that have been arranged. Female leadership is important for the program.

8.2.1b GNB partners

Bangladesh Model Youth Parliament, BRAC, CARE, Grameen Samaj Unnayan Kendra, KOTHOWAIN (Vulnerable People's Development Organization), MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Odhikar, Plan International, Population Council, Reach to Unreached, Shariatpur Development Society (SDS), Social Economic Development Society (SEDS), White Ribbon Alliance, World Vision.

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/>

8.2.2 Benin

8.2.2a Partner organisations

THP Benin

THP Benin will start up child marriage activities. In Africa, THP uses the Epicenter Strategy for sustainable community-based programmes. An epicentre consists of 10-15 villages in which people and local governments are trained to address hunger and poverty and move toward sustainable self-reliance. More broadly, THP uses three pillars in all of their programmes. These are: 1. Empowering women as change agents, 2. Mobilising communities into self-reliant action. 3. Fostering partnerships to engage local governments.¹⁶¹

8.2.2b GNB members

Association Béninoise Pour la Promotion des Orphelins et Enfants Abandonnés, CARE.

8.2.3 Burkina Faso

8.2.3a Partner organisations

SKN

Works with local partners who work at the district (Commune) level in the regions Boucle de Mouhoun, Cascades, Centre-Nord, Centre-Ouest, Centre-Sud, Hauts Bassins and Nord. All of these partners are members of the GNB network and ADEP is the lead organisation of Her Choice in Burkina Faso.

- Action Féminine pour le Développement Participatif (AFDP)
- Association d'Appui et d'Eveil Pugsada (ADEP)
- Association MAIA
- Association Zak-La-Yiguemdé (AZLY)
- Association Dembagnouma des Femmes de Tougan (DEMBAGNOUMA)
- Association des Jeunes pour le Bien-être Familial de Bogoya (AJBFB)
- Association pour le Développement SONGTAABA (ADS)
- Association Zak-La-Yilguemdé Maia (AZLY – Association Maia)

THP Burkina Faso

THP works in districts in the regions Boucle de Mouhoun, Centre-Est, Centre Nord, Centre-Ouest, Est, Hauts Bassins, Nord, Plateau-Central, Sahel. It uses the Epicenter Strategy (see 8.2.2a).

8.2.3b GNB members

Association Dembagnouma des Femmes de Tougan, Association pour le Développement SONGTAABA, Fondation pour le Développement Communautaire, Fondation Rama d'aide aux femmes victimes de fistule obstétricale / prolapsus, Voix de Femmes.

¹⁶¹ See: <http://www.thp.org/our-work/our-approach/>

8.2.3c Government Initiatives

According to personal communication with Girls Not Brides, the government of Burkina Faso launched its national strategy to end child marriage in December 2015

8.2.4 Ethiopia

8.2.4a Partner organisations

ICDI

Local partner Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) works in the regions of Amhara and SNNPRS.

SKN

Local partners:

- African Development Aid Association (ADAA)
- Birhan Integrated Community Development Organization (BICDO)
- Development Expertise Centre (DEC)
- Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE)
- Love in Action Ethiopia (LIAE)
- Organisation for the Development of Women and Children (ODWaCE)
- Wabe Children Aid & Training (WCAT)

These partners work at the *kebele* (neighbourhood) and *woreda* (district) level in the regions of Amhara, Oromiya and SNNPRS. They are involved in strengthening regional and local networks set up by the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs. They are also connected with the Community Care Coalitions (CCCs) which set up social protection measures at community level for vulnerable groups (especially female headed households). FSCE will function as the focal organisation of the Her Choice Alliance in Ethiopia, linking national and local levels. DEC will provide SRHR training of teachers on behalf of all partners.

THP

Starting up child marriage activities. THP already works on other issues in the regions of Amhara, Oromiya and SNNPRS. The Epicenter Strategy will be used (see 8.2.2a)

8.2.4b GNB members

African Development Aid Association (ADAA), Amref Health Africa, CARE, Center of Concern, EGLDAM (YE Ethiopia Goji Lamadawi Dirgitoch Aswogaj Mahiber), Enhance Worldwide, Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia, Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC), KMG Ethiopia, Light Ethiopia, Pathfinder International, Plan International, Population Council, The African Child Policy Forum, The Former Child Wives Foundation – Campaign Against Child Marriage in Ethiopia.

8.2.4c Government departments

The federal Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs led the development in 2011 of Ethiopia's National Strategy and Action Plan on Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and

Children in Ethiopia. This strategy includes child marriage and FGM as part of the broader initiative and was officially launched in 2013.¹⁶²

8.2.5 Ghana

8.2.5a Local partners

THP Ghana

THP will be starting child marriage activities, working in districts in the Ashanti, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra and Volta Regions. The Epicenter Strategy will be used (see 8.2.2a).

8.2.5b GNB members

African Initiatives, Centre for Initiative Against Human Trafficking (CIAHT), CMG Empowerment Ghana, Community Development Alliance, Ghana NGO coalition on the rights of the child, Ghanaian Association for Women's Welfare (GAWW), Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation, Great Ladies in Ministry Foundation (GLIMS), Hats Community Empowerment Programme (HACEP-Ghana), League of Young Female Leaders, Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa, Muslim Family Counselling Services (MFCS), Net Organisation for Youth Empowerment and Development (NOYED), Pan-African Organisation for Research and Protection of Violence on Women and Children (PAORP-VWC), Research and Counseling Foundation for African Migrants (RECFAM), Rhema Evangelistic Healing Ministry, Safe Child Ghana, Savana Signatures, Simli AiD, Sung Foundation – SUFOD, Women's Integrated Development Organisation, Wuni Zaligu Development Association, Yaakoro Youth Development Center (YADEC), Youth Harvest Foundation.

8.2.5c Government

In February 2016 the Government of Ghana, led by Ghana's Minister for Gender, Children, and Social Protection, launched a national campaign to end child marriage. The campaign was announced at the African Conference of First Ladies on Sexual and Reproductive Rights. A social media campaign was also launched by the Ministry.¹⁶³

8.2.6 Mali

8.2.6a Partner organisations

SKN

Local partners:

- Association Pour la Promotion ses Droits et du Bien Être de la Famille (APSEF)
- Association pour la Protection des Droits de l'Enfant et de la Famille en Détresse (APEFD)
- Association Tabital Atam-Mopti (ATAM)
- Enda Benkadi
- Enda Mali
- ONG Tagne
- JiguiSeme

¹⁶² See: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/ethiopia/>

¹⁶³ Girls Not Brides 2016

Partners work at the district level in the regions of Koulikoro, Mopti and Ségou and the district of Bamako.

8.2.6b GNB members

Association JIGUISEME, Association Malienne pour la Survie au Sahel, Association pour la Promotion de la Femme et de l'Enfant (ASSOPROFEN), Association pour la Promotion des Droits et du Bien Être de la Famille (APSEF), Association Tabital ATAM-Mopti, Environnement et Développement du Mali (ENDA), International Association for Maternal and Neonatal Health (IAMANEH), Norwegian Church Aid, Right to Play, School Girls Unite, Soutoura.

8.2.6c Government

As part of the African Union's campaign to end child marriage, Mali launched its national campaign in October 2015. The campaign is headed by the First Lady and called "Education for girls: a means to eliminating early child marriage".¹⁶⁴

8.2.7 Nepal

8.2.7a Local partners

ICDI

Local partner, Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) is an organisation advocating for the rights of the child. Its main areas of concern are child labour, street children, child marriage, bonded labour, trafficking of children, children in conflict with laws and commercial-sexual exploitation of children. It works at the district level in the Central, Eastern, Mid-Western and Far-Western development regions and in Kathmandu.

8.2.7b GNB members

Aama Milan Kendra (AMK), BHOPE, CARE, Center for Research on Environment Health and Population Activities (CREHPA), Child Welfare Society, Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN), Educate the Children (ETC), Her Turn, Janaki Women Awareness Society (JWAS), MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child, READ Global, Rural Women's Network Nepal (RUWON), Samrakshak Samuha Nepal (SASANE), Social Awareness Concerned Forum Nepal Banke (SAC), Society for Local Integrated Development (SOLID) Nepal

8.2.7c Government

The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare led the development of a national strategy to end child marriage between March 2014 and January 2015, which included research to determine

¹⁶⁴ See: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/mali/>

the best strategic direction and interventions. The recent earthquake means it is unclear whether the strategy will be adopted.¹⁶⁵

8.2.8 Pakistan

8.2.8a Local Partners

ICDI

Partner organisation Bedari is an established NGO that works with women and children to promote and protect their human rights. It was founded in 1990 and has expertise on issues of women's empowerment, addressing violence against women and girls, and processes of attitudinal change. Bedari works at district level in the Punjab region and is a member of the GNB network, of the Alliance Against Child Marriage and joined a Technical Working Group, established by the Social Welfare Department of the Punjabi Government

8.2.8b GNB members

Aahung, Action Aid, Advocacy, Research, Training and Services (ARTS) Foundation, AWAZ Foundation Pakistan Centre for Development Studies, Bedari, Blue Veins, Children and Women Trust, Civil Society Support Program (CSSP), Democratic Commission for Human Development (DCHD), Development & Economic Empowerment of People (DEEP) Foundation, DIN – Development Institutions' Network, FACES Pakistan, Fast Rural Development Program (FRDP), Gender and Empowerment Organization (GEO), Girls Assembly, Hamdam Development Organization (HDO), Hari Welfare Association, Hwa Foundation, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, Jaag Welfare Movement, Kafka Welfare Organization, Kehkashan Development Organization, Literate Masses, Nari Foundation, National Integrated Development Association (NIDA-Pakistan), Organisation for Public Interest (OPI), Organization for Community Development (OCD), Organization for Development and Peace, Pakistan Rural Workers Social Welfare Organisation (PRWSWO), Parveen Nadeem Welfare Organization (PNWO), Peace Foundation, Psycho-Social Research Advocacy and Rule of Law (PAROL), Roshni Welfare Organization (RWO), Rural Development Foundation, Saher Arts for Peace & Sustainable Development, Sangtani Women Rural Development Organization (SWRDO), Save the Children, Sindh Development Society (SDS), Sister's Council (khwendo jirga), Society for Rights and Development, Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), Sujag Sansar Organization, Sustainable Transformation for Rural Initiatives and Voluntary Efforts (STRIVE), The Awakening, Unique Development Organization, Youth Association for Development (YAD).

8.2.8c Government

Pakistan is a member of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) and therefore has adopted the regional action plan to target child marriage. It was also one of the first countries to propose the inclusion of a target to end child marriage by 2030 in the SDGs.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Girls Not Brides 2015b

¹⁶⁶ See: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/pakistan/>

8.2.9 Senegal

8.2.9a Partner organisations

SKN

SKN is starting up child marriage initiatives with local partners. The partners are ENDA Jeunesse Action and Comité National des Enseignantes pour la Promotion de la Scolarisation des Filles (CNEPSCOFI). They work at the district level in the regions of Dakar, Fatick, Kaffrine, Kaolack, Kédougou, Kolda, Louga, Matam, Saint-Louis, Sédhiou, Tambacounda and Ziguinchor. The organisations are active in the field of education and child labour. ENDA specifically focuses on girls' rights and they are setting up a special programme for child marriage, especially in the Kolda Region.

8.2.9b GNB members

Actions pour le Développement par l'Éducation et la Réinsertion (ADERE), Amref Health Africa, Association de Développement Communautaire, Ninnaba Kolda (ADC NINNABA), Association de Femmes pour l'Appui aux Actions de Développement (AFAAD), Association des Jeunes pour le Développement (AJD PASTEEF), Association des Jeunes pour le Développement de Bakel (AJDB), Association des Relais IEC-Santé "Fankanta", Case and Diapale Xaley, Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (COSEF), Demngalam, GIE Association des Relais Santé Communautaire de Diaobé (ARSD), GIE CONFÉKA, GIE INA Groupe, GIE Khel Ak Khalat, Grandmother Project, Mouvement Jeunesse & Culture de Kolda, Réseau des Femmes CESIRI, Réseau des Pairs Educateurs de Tambacounda (REPET), Tostan.

8.2.10 Sierra Leone

8.2.10a Partner organisations

ICDI

Local partner organisation, One Family People, works at district level in Moyamba province and in Freetown/Western Area. They focus especially on teenage girls with disabilities as these are the most vulnerable girls who face huge pressure from parents to enter into informal union with older men as a way to remove the burden on the family. The organisation especially focuses on the engagement of boys and men.

8.2.10b GNB members

Chi-chi Cheery Foundation, Child Welfare Society, Child help Sierra Leone, Conscience International (CI), Defence for Children International Sierra Leone, Economic Empowerment and Human Rights Sierra Leone (EEHRSL), Forum for the Development of Young People, Foundation for Local Economic Development and Human Rights – Sierra Leone (FLEDHR-SL), Girl Child Network Worldwide, Hagancatwright Organization, National Co-operative of Students for Self-Reliance (NACORS), Service for Peace, The Needy Today, Yegesie International Open College of Technology (YIOTEC), Young Ambassadors Sierra Leone (YASiL),

8.2.10c Government

Sierra Leone is currently implementing a national strategy to reduce teenage pregnancy, “Let Girls be Girls, Not Mothers”.¹⁶⁷

8.2.11 Uganda

8.2.11a Partner organisations

THP

THP Uganda works in districts in the Central, Eastern, and Western Regions. They have already carried out successful activities to combat child marriage which were started in the Child Marriage Fund programme. They use the Epicenter Strategy (see 8.2.2a)

8.2.11b GNB members

Action for Community Development Uganda (ACODEV-U), Agape of Hope – Female Youth Development Association, Allied Youth Initiative, Amani Initiative, Amref Health Africa, Bulogo Women’s Group, Child Aid Uganda, Child Care And Youth Empowerment Foundation (CCAYEF), Child Rights Empowerment and Development Organization (CEDO), Coalition of Uganda Private School Teachers Association (COUPSTA), Community Empowerment and Education Projects Initiative (CEEPI), Concern for the Girl Child (CGC), Girl Child Network Worldwide, Global Batwa Outreach, Gwanga Power, Help African Girl Child Uganda, Hope Foundation, Human Rights and Democracy Link (RIDE) Africa, Joy for Children Uganda (JFCU), KAANA Foundation for Outreach Programs, Kids Club Kampala, Mutyabule Foundation, Nabirye Foundation, Rwenzori Peace Bridge of Reconciliation, Shalom Women’s Development Initiative Agency, Uganda Rural Information and Communication Technology / Education Center (URICT-Uganda), Uganda Youth and Adolescent Health Forum (UYAHF), Uganda Youth Network (UYONET), Unbound, Wakisa Ministries, Women of Uganda Network (Wougnet), Women Participatory Development Initiative (WOPADI), Youth Empowerment Trust, Youth Partnership Uganda.

8.2.11c Government

The Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development developed a National Strategy to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy, which was launched by the government in June 2015. This is a five year strategy aiming to create a society free from child marriage and teenage pregnancy.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ See: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/sierra-leone/>

¹⁶⁸ See: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/uganda/>

9. Strategies to Decrease the Prevalence of Child Marriage

The Her Choice SRHR Alliance has 6 strategies for dealing with child marriage. These build on the alliance members experience and findings in to what is successful in combatting child marriage, as well as evidence from the Girls Not Brides network. These strategies are described below, alongside related external literature. The importance of combining strategies and of improving monitoring and evaluation are frequently discussed in organisational literature across regions, and so this information is also summarised.

9.1 Strategies of the Her Choice Alliance

Table 8 – Intervention Strategies

Strategy	Description
Strategy I Invest in girls, their knowledge, skills related to SRHR and participation in society	Enhance comprehension of the negative effects of child marriage and of alternative options. Knowledge transferred by teachers, peers, girls who have experienced child marriage and health workers through schools, youth clubs and youth-friendly SRHR services. Support participation by having girls participate as role models or peer educators. Also a focus increasing the knowledge, skills and attitudes towards SRHR of boys and young men.
External literature	
<p>An evaluation of CARE International’s program in Ethiopia found that girls who received SRH training significantly improved their knowledge and negotiating skills over sexual and reproductive issues, such as family planning. The local community internalised messages on contraception and prevented 70 child marriages from taking place.¹⁶⁹</p> <p>In Ethiopia, The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2015) highlights the need for schools to ensure students have access to SRHR information and contraceptives.</p> <p>The ODI also highlight the benefits of building programming on local role models, recognising the accomplishments of educated women, including teachers, and encouraging parents who keep their daughters in school to share their experiences. Using local people is especially important here as known faces are more powerful in teaching the risks of child marriage. Hiwot Ethiopia’s inclusion of divorced girls and CARE’s TESA are highlighted as examples of good practice here.</p> <p>The ODI further explain that, in Ethiopia, messages about the health risks of child marriage are well understood and should be continued. Especially in areas where the practice is hidden, these messages of risk need to be balanced with messages of the benefits of adult marriage, such as lower risk of poverty. Messages should also directly address gender inequality, to shift the norms that drive child marriage.¹⁷⁰</p> <p>In their program in Ghana, ActionAid found substantial parental resistance to interventions educating girls about safe sex, blaming the organisation for a perceived rise in girls’ promiscuity and bad manners.¹⁷¹</p>	

¹⁶⁹ Edmeades and Hayes 2014

¹⁷⁰ Jones et al 2015

¹⁷¹ Parkes and Heslop 2014

<p>Strategy II Improve access to formal education for girls</p>	<p>Get as many girls to school and minimise drop out. Focus on supporting girl-friendly schools including through child protection policies and creating safe routes to and from school. Training teachers in effective ways of teaching about SRHR and the negative effects of child marriage. Also includes adult literacy programmes and campaigns teaching parents the importance of school; nursery school programmes to ensure that young girls from poor families do not lag behind in starting school. This may be achieved through investing in Early Childhood Education and Care programmes and conditional cash transfer programmes.</p>
<p>External Literature</p>	
<p>CARE International’s Leadership Development programs, run in multiple developing countries, work to empower girls and change communities so that girls are no longer considered as objects of ownership or protection, but as individuals with rights. One of the ways of achieving this is by enabling girls to gain and retain access to equitable quality education. CARE found that building leadership on a schooling foundation works, but school systems are not enough; community based organisations need to be engaged and more accessible spaces for girls need to be created. CARE learnt through the program that boys and men need to be deliberately engaged from the start for programs to be successful and programs need adequate funding and staffing to work with males.¹⁷²</p> <p>Brown (2012) argues that education has the greatest potential to end child marriage, especially when initiatives focus on the “tipping point years”. These are the years where girls are most likely to drop out of school (usually in primary school or in the transition to secondary school) or at the age when risks of child marriage rapidly increases, generally age 13-14. Effective strategies here include cutting direct and indirect school fees; building classrooms close to communities in rural areas to reduce distance to school; supporting girls in primary education, social protection and conditional cash transfers and designing programmes to promote all levels of education. This should be done alongside national and international child marriage and education strategies.</p> <p>Walker (2012) finds that in Africa conditional cash transfers are the most effective means of keeping girls in school, to combat child marriage, especially when combined with advocacy.</p> <p>Walker (2013) finds that in West Africa, focusing on girls’ education is the second most common form of intervention. Best practice in this intervention area is found to be involving communities through community mobilization and literacy support. Other useful practices were improvements to education quality, the provision of safe spaces and school clubs, cash transfers and empowerment education.</p> <p>The ODI discusses the need to enforce compulsory schooling for all children, through to 8th grade, even if they are married in Ethiopia. There then needs to be a system to ensure rural children are prepared better for national exams. All schools need segregated toilets with adequate privacy and menstrual management programs should be offered in schools to improve attendance. Families need support in sending their children to secondary schools, where governments should consider cash transfers which would “simultaneously address the need for better poverty programming and restrictive gender norms”. It is highlighted that onsite dormitories would be especially beneficial for girls at secondary and tertiary levels to solve parents’ fears about sexual violence. As enrolment rises, schools need to be supported to become central agents in keeping girls in school and preventing child marriage, using paid counsellors to monitor and guide students. Programming should also be geared to helping married girls return to school, delay first child birth and negotiate equitable relationships with their husbands. CARE’s TEFSa program is considered an example of best practice here.¹⁷³</p> <p>In Asia, Yarrow (2015) recommends working with officials to ensure scholarships etc. are aimed at girls; establishing links between schools and non-school settings, such as youth groups, to support structures for girls who are at risk of child marriage; encouraging local employers to sponsor a school and set up after school income generating activities and establishing apprenticeships for girls who stay at school until the end of secondary school. Yarrow also recommends, amongst many other things, engaging with PTA groups to improve their capacity to advocate against child marriage</p>	

¹⁷² Adolwa et al 2013

¹⁷³ Jones et al 2015

<p>Strategy III Improve access to youth-friendly SRHR-services for girls (and boys) by improving health services and by actively referring girls (and boys) to health workers.</p>	<p>Training health workers and volunteers to improve their youth-friendly attitude, especially attention to girls’ rights, non-judgmental attitudes and the importance of privacy in clinics. Linking teachers and peer educators to health workers for SRHR information and the referral of girls (and boys) to youth-friendly SHRH services.</p>
<p>External Literature</p>	
<p>Walker (2013) stated that in West Africa, best practice in this area includes “building partnerships to broaden sexuality education, integrating HIV/AIDS prevention messages into all projects and testing and delivery of high-quality confidential services”.</p> <p>Yarrow (2015) recommends developing “gender-sensitive youth friendly health clinics” in Asia and developing a means of confidentially disseminating information on sexual health through schools or youth groups in Bangladesh.</p>	
<p>Strategy IV Improve the economic security of girls and their families</p>	<p>Creating or strengthening self-help groups, providing micro-finance loans, training (mostly female) small-scale entrepreneurs on financial literacy, entrepreneurship, local market information and improved agricultural practices</p>
<p>External Literature</p>	
<p>Perezniето and Tefera (2014) highlight in Ethiopia that education, skills training and economic empowerment of girls are needed to tackle the economic insecurity that allows the existence of discriminatory social norms</p> <p>UNFPA (2012) highlight the need to improve the economic situation of girls and their families and empowering girls</p> <p>An evaluation of CARE International’s program in Ethiopia found economic empowerment training for girls significantly impacted girl’s economic activities.¹⁷⁴</p> <p>Walker (2013) found that best practice in West Africa in economic interventions required research-driven targeting to avoid in- and exclusion errors.</p> <p>The ODI states that in Ethiopia “girls need employment options if they are to remain unmarried and in control of their own lives”. There is therefore a need for vocational training programmes and non-migratory employment options. It is highlighted that there is a lack of evidence of good practice on this area, and that investment is needed to test what approaches are effective in different local contexts.¹⁷⁵</p> <p>Yarrow (2015) highlights the need to support girls and their families in Asia so that they can engage in saving schemes or programmes to build the capacity of girls to build and save financial resources. Girls and women also need support in setting up business by, for example, having mentors in the community and encouraging loans to females.</p>	
<p>Strategy V Transform social norms that are detrimental to achieving gender equity in education, decision making, and access to services by mobilising and supporting communities, including boys, men, women and leaders to promote girls’ rights and gender equity.</p>	<p>Transferring knowledge and skills to community members on gender roles, the negative effects of child marriage and on alternatives through awareness raising activities and community dialogue meetings. Empowering community members to support girls’ rights and reject child marriage. Training of religious and traditional leaders, traditional birth attendants, circumcisers. Encouraging community members to become change agents.</p>

¹⁷⁴ Adolwa et al 2013

¹⁷⁵ Jones et al 2015

External Literature	
<p>Care International’s leadership program works to enable girls to cultivate leadership competencies through supportive leadership opportunities. Girls have gone on to use these skills to take action on issues of their choice, including child marriage and sexual violence. Girls have also built coalitions with other social actors for mutual support, greater voice and/or access to resources.¹⁷⁶</p> <p>In an analysis of programmes in Ethiopia, the ODI finds that peer-to-peer education is powerful in combatting child marriage and that engaging elders and males is crucial to the success of programs.¹⁷⁷</p> <p>In Ethiopia, Pereznieto and Tefera (2014) argue that interventions are needed that work with communities to change attitudes and support girls out of school.</p> <p>UNFPA (2012) discusses the need for mobilising communities to transform social norms</p> <p>Walker (2013) found that in West Africa, best practice in community mobilisation included public declarations and engaging males and cultural, community and faith leaders</p> <p>The ODI in Ethiopia discusses that participatory designs create stronger programs, community and religious leaders and boys and men need to be included and that face to face discussion encourages local ownership. It is highlighted that community dialogues can be effective interventions, but work best when they target adolescents and adults separately. The ODI also highlights that in such interventions, meeting fatigues is a challenge that should be planned for from the start.¹⁷⁸</p>	
<p>Strategy VI Create an enabling legal and policy environment on preventing child marriage by supporting traditional leaders and (local) authorities to enforce national policies on preventing child marriage.</p>	<p>Community level activities focus on mobilising traditional and religious leaders to develop by-laws prohibiting child marriage, and on mobilising representatives of local government and municipalities to take action to end child marriage by the enforcement of laws, such as birth and marriage registration. At national level in countries committed to international agreements, sharing knowledge and experiences with relevant networks on child rights which provide recommendations to governmental policy makers. In other countries, lobbying and advocating for adequate legislation to protect girls’ rights. At international level, sharing best practice between local partners, international networks and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p>
External Literature	
<p>Care International work to foster an enabling environment for girl’s rights, with the aim of promoting long term change in social and cultural environments. CARE does this by helping community influencers, especially including males, to analyse and change attitudes and behaviours towards girls.</p> <p>Walker 2013 notes that in West Africa best practice in legal interventions is critical feedback, which provides an entry point for advocacy and mobilization by NGOs.</p> <p>In Ethiopia, the ODI highlights the need for more effective systems to enforce the law, including “developing consistent reporting chains, so that girls know where to turn for help” and providing officials with the support they need for consistent law enforcement.¹⁷⁹</p> <p>Yarrow (2015) for Plan, highlights the need to advocate for a law banning the institution of the dowry in Pakistan, modelled on Bangladesh, and awareness raising about the law banning the dowry amongst officials in Bangladesh. In Asia more generally, Yarrow recommends community awareness raising of the legal age of marriage, working to improve monitoring systems of marriage registration, sensitising local religious registrars and magistrates to minimum age of marriage laws and carrying out capacity building with stakeholders more generally.</p>	

¹⁷⁶ Adolwa et al 2013

¹⁷⁷ Jones et al 2015

¹⁷⁸ Jones et al 2015

¹⁷⁹ Jones et al 2015

9.2 Combining interventions

All program documentation and literature evaluating programs discuss the importance of combining multiple interventions in order for success. UNFPA (2012) highlights that the most effective interventions combine multiple approaches and are cross-sectoral. This need for approaches to be cross-sectoral and multi-scalar are frequently discussed, with Brown (2012) and ICRW (2015), for example, highlighting the need for NGO programmes to be carried out alongside national strategies against child marriage, in order to spread the reach and consistency of programs.

The literature also suggests it is important to use a combination of interventions to achieve results. Many organisational documents refer to the fact that any intervention into child marriage needs to include a community education aspect, to make the community aware of the harms of early marriage and the benefits of delaying marriage. This makes it more likely for the community to support interventions and the empowerment of girls. In Ethiopia, the ODI discusses how the use of multiple angles is required to achieve transformatory change, and that each approach needs to be carefully tailored to meet the needs of the community.¹⁸⁰ Globally, the ODI, highlights the need to combine community based approaches to tackle deeply ingrained discriminatory practices, tackling income poverty and improving access to quality education.¹⁸¹ There is also the need to integrate tackling child marriage alongside other, broader initiatives, such as SRHR initiatives and, as discussed by World Vision, initiatives tackling FGM.¹⁸²

However, it is not always the case that there will be a synergistic effect when combining interventions. An evaluation of CARE International's program in Ethiopia, for example, found that, although girls who received both SRH and economic empowerment training benefitted the most from the initiative as they learnt more, this was not a result of combining the two trainings. Rather it was simply a result of receiving the two separate trainings.¹⁸³

9.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The literature also frequently makes reference to the need for improved monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of child marriage initiatives, highlighting that a lack of this is currently a major barrier to effective programming. According to Bueshcher (2012) and Jones et al (2015) to ensure the sustainability of a program, monitoring and evaluation needs to be long term. Long term M&E will enable organisations to understand impact and cost-effectiveness and to improve the content and implementation of a program.¹⁸⁴ The authors argue that it is crucial that such M&E monitors the unintended consequences of programs, to ensure they are not having detrimental effects in other areas, as in the case of FGM and child marriage discussed in section 5.2.6.

From its child marriage programs in Ethiopia, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) finds that, due to the variation in patterns of child marriage, individual programmes need local baseline data in order to tailor programming. Programmes also need to evaluate data in the long-term to create a sustainable program. The ODI also highlights that M&E information and learning needs to be shared amongst NGOs and with government agencies, to identify the most effective programmatic approaches and ensure these are implemented as strategies.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ Jones et al 2015

¹⁸¹ Harper et al 2014

¹⁸² World Vision UK 2014

¹⁸³ Edmeades and Hayes 2014

¹⁸⁴ Bueshcher 2012; Jones et al 2015

¹⁸⁵ Jones et al 2015

10. Gaps in Research

Although there is a substantial amount of literature available on child marriage, much of this, especially in organisational literature, can be repetitive in its content, leaving gaps in research and knowledge. Broad gaps have been identified and highlighted through this study, and these are summarised in Table 9. Table 10 details the more specific gaps in research that have been identified in a study commissioned by the Ford Foundation (Greene, 2014) and World Health Organisation.

Table 9 –Gaps in research identified through this study

- Information on all aspects of child marriage amongst boys
- Rates of child marriage according to religion, ethnicity and caste
- Forms of marriage in different countries (beyond arranged/love/dowry/bride price marriage)
- Effects of family structure on child marriage
- Contraceptive usage for girls below 15
- The relationship between FGM and child marriage – whether ending FGM effects incidents of child marriage beyond Somalia
- Upper secondary school and university enrolment/participation rates
- An exploration or explanation of the causal relationship between child marriage and education
- What is taught in formal schooling about child marriage
- The role that teachers play in preventing child marriage
- Why parents do/do not continue their daughter’s education and do/do not marry their daughters young
- Access to health services (beyond contraceptive usage) in African countries
- Husband’s awareness of SRH issues, such as maternal and antenatal health
- Girls’ perceptions and experiences of being married young and being young mothers and brides. Some literature suggests this is often a girls’ accepted fate, others discuss the importance of using positive deviance role models, but few take an in-depth look at the feelings and beliefs of children on the topic.
- Certain country contexts, especially Sierra Leone and Mali, especially in academic as opposed to organisational documentation.
- The extent to which governments enforce the child marriage intervention strategies they have initiated and the effect that the initiatives have.
- Monitoring and evaluation of programs, which makes learning and sharing notions of best practice difficult.

Table 10 - Gaps in research identified in existing literature

The Ford Foundation¹⁸⁶ highlights that literature is strong at describing the problem of child marriage but weak at sharing success stories for solutions. It provides an extensive series of research questions that need exploring. The World Health Organisation¹⁸⁷ also identifies gaps in research. The below list is adapted from these sources.

The prevalence and causes of child marriage in changing contexts

- Rates of child marriage according to religion, ethnicity and social class
- The causes of child marriage outside of Africa and South Asia
- The effect of evolving trends including urbanisation, improved access to education, migration, changes in labour markets and climate change driven droughts and food insecurity on the causes of child marriage
- Normative shifts in expectations of marriage, e.g. changing households, acceptability of dating

The lived reality of girls

- What are safe, viable and attractive alternatives for girls?
- What are the characteristics of positive deviants?
- What happens to girls who do not marry and what are the effects of delaying marriage?
- Do girls who marry later really experience higher quality marriages?
- When girls are employed, is it the experience of work or the cash that makes a difference to girls' lives? Are the effects lasting on the quality of their marriage, and norms relating to marriage?
- The effects of "second shift" – girls engaging in income earning work and then having to carry out domestic work at home
- The effects programs have on the quality of marital decision making, rather than just on delaying age of marriage
- Mental health consequences for child brides
- Effects of child marriage on those married below 15
- The long term and intergenerational effects of child marriage
- The needs of girls who have escaped marriage or are divorced or widowed.
- The consequences of divorce for young women

Analysis into programs and interventions

- Programs need (improved) evaluation
- What are the characteristics of positive deviants at different levels?
- How can parents be influenced to keep girls in school and is this effective?
- In what way are cash transfers most effective and do they result in norm change?
- What are the most successful ways to change norms amongst males, how does this impact females and what effect does this have on the quality of marriage?
- When boys marry early, it does not mean the end of investment in their human capital. What can be done to shift the expectation that this happens for girls?
- What works effectively in the implementation of laws?
- How can advocacy be effective in the case of customary law?
- More work is needed with married girls, such as their access to services and links with the community

The relationship between child marriage and other areas

- What has worked to shift entrenched norms such FGM and unsafe sex?
- How can successful efforts to combat FGM and GBV shed light on efforts to tackle child marriage?
- What are the relationships between legal age of consent and age at marriage?

¹⁸⁶ Greene 2014

¹⁸⁷ Svanemyr et al 2015

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