

The Human Rights Council



Combatting Forced and Child Marriage as a Human Rights Violation with Special Attention to Women and Girls

-Committee Guide-

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CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE
2. INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

II. FACTS AND CURRENT SITUATION

1. CURRENT SITUATION AROUND THE WORLD
2. SITUATION IN THE US
3. EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGE

III. DEVELOPMENTS AND PROGRESS

1. PROGRESS

IV. ECONOMIC CHANGES

1. CHANGES
2. STATISTICS

V. PICTURES

VI. USEFUL LINKS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

The HRC was founded as a subsidiary body of the United Nations in 2006.

It replaced the Commission on Human Rights, which had been regarded as overly politicized.

As one of the main UN bodies tasked with human rights protection, the HRC discusses a large variety of issues, from preventing discrimination to political rights and the rights of refugees.

In addition to being a discussion forum for these issues, the HRC issues recommendations to the General Assembly and promotes human rights education.

47 member states elected by the General Assembly make up this body, and the HRC meets for at least three sessions a year in Geneva.

An innovative mechanism was introduced in 2006 to improve respect for human rights: in the Universal Periodic Review, the human rights situation in every member

state is reviewed every four years and recommendations are issued by the other members.

The first session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) took place from 19 to 30 June 2006 in Geneva.

Representatives from over 100 countries attended and the session focused on setting up the Council's structure and priorities.

2. INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

Child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child. More than 650 million women alive today already suffer the direct consequences of child marriage. If pre-pandemic trends continue,

150 million more girls will be married by 2030. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this may increase by a further 13 million girls. Few statistics exist on the exact number of boys that affected by child marriage. Approximately 115 million boys and men around the world were married as children. Of these, 1 in 5 children, or 23 million overall, were married before the age of 15.

Although a significant number of boys are also affected by child marriage, this issue disproportionately impacts girls. Globally, girls are far more likely to be married off at a young age, often facing more severe physical, emotional and social consequences.

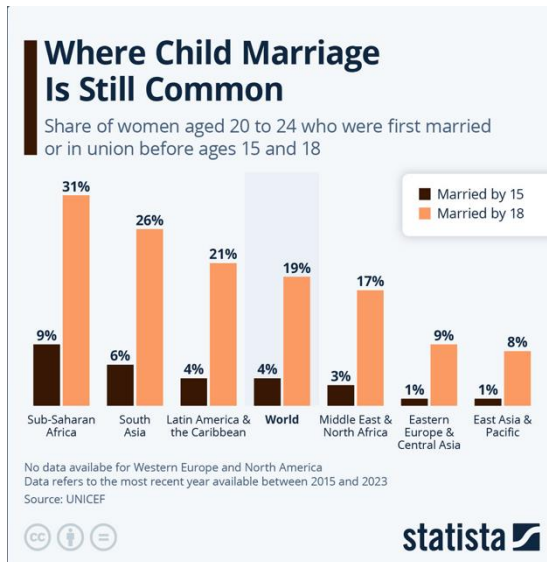
Child marriage robs girls of their childhood and threatens their well-being. Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence and less likely to remain in school. They have worse economic and health outcomes than their unmarried peers and these problems can carry over to their own children, straining a country's capacity to provide quality health and education services. Child brides often become pregnant during adolescence, when the risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth increases. The practice of child marriage can also isolate girls from family and friends, taking a heavy toll on their mental health.

The issue is not confined to one region or culture. Child marriage occurs across the world, in both developing and developed countries, though it is most prevalent in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Latin America. However, this issue also affects many girls in the United States of America. Only 13 out of 50 states have banned child marriage. There is still no minimum age of marriage established in law in California, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.

Child marriage is therefore a problem all around the world, that must be addressed, especially in regions such as South Asia, but also in other places where it is less visible.

II. FACTS AND CURRENT SITUATION

1. CURRENT SITUATION AROUND THE WORLD



- In Sub-Saharan Africa, almost one in three girls gets married or enters a cohabiting relationship before the age of 18

- In South Asia, 26% of girls marry before 18. Cultural norms and poverty play a significant role

<https://www.statista.com/chart/28646/child-marriage-by-continent/>

2. SITUATION IN THE US



<https://www.unchainedatlast.org/united-states-child-marriage-problem-study-findings-april-2021/>

In the United States of America child marriage can be forced, since minors have limited legal rights often lack the legal rights to escape an unwanted marriage.

3. EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGE



https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/The-power-of-education-to-end-child-marriage.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjf98u5k_aNAxU9SfEDHShXK-UQFnoECBEQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3897O52qAVzjY34OyYpEUI

- Keeping girls in school is one of the best ways of delaying marriage. On average, the likelihood of a girl marrying as a child is reduced by six percentage points for every additional year she stays in secondary education
- The younger the age at marriage, the greater the impact. Once married, a girl is very unlikely to remain in or return to school

III. DEVELOPMENTS AND PROGRESS

1. PROGRESS

Child marriage is a serious issue that must be addressed promptly to protect future generations from its harmful consequences.

In 2016, UNICEF joined [UNFPA](#) (United Nations Population Fund) to launch the Global Program to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, focusing efforts in 12 countries where the practice is most prevalent: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia. The initiative focuses on engaging families, communities, governments and young people to prevent child marriage by empowering girls at risk and supporting those who were married as children.

Program work is rooted in the following four proven strategies:

- increasing girls' access to education
- educating parents and communities on the dangers of child marriage
- increasing economic support to families
- strengthening and enforcing laws that establish 18 as the minimum age of marriage

The program has reached more than 21 million adolescent girls with life-skills training, comprehensive sexuality education and school attendance support since 2016.

Child marriage is often rooted in poverty, limited access to education, gender inequality and social norms. In response to this issue, UNICEF launched a five-year Strategic Action Plan aimed at ending child marriage by 2030. So far, it has reached 2.5 million adolescents, declared over 11,000 villages child-marriage-free and prevented approximately 950 child marriages in 2022 alone.

IV. ECONOMIC CHANGES

1. CHANGES

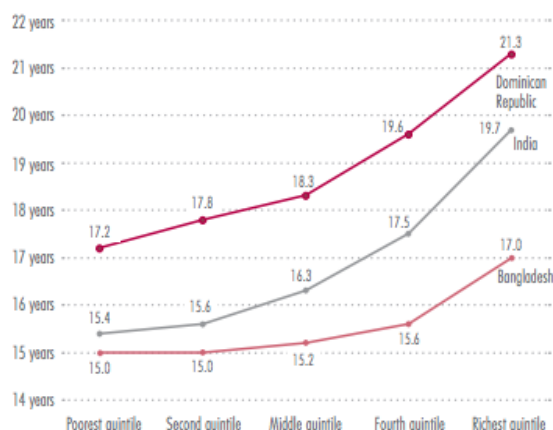
Child marriage is costing countries trillions of dollars due to its effects on fertility and population growth, individual earnings and child health. These costs come from several problems: girls who marry

early often leave school, have fewer chances to get good jobs, have more children and face health issues that lead to higher medical costs. Statistics show that if child marriage had ended in 2015, the global economy could have saved \$556 billion by 2030. Child marriage limits a country's potential by reducing its human capital. When girls are denied education and opportunities to work, whole communities lose out on important skills, ideas, and future economic growth.

2. STATISTICS

In the Dominican Republic and India, the wealthiest women marry about four years later than the poorest women

Median age at first marriage or union among women aged 25 to 49 years, by wealth quintile, in selected countries



<https://data.unicef.org/resources/ending-child-marriage-progress-and-prospects/>

- The median age at first marriage increases with income level
- Socioeconomic status is a key factor in early marriage
- Policies must focus on supporting disadvantaged groups

V. PICTURES



<https://camfed.org/eur/3-survivors-of-child-marriage-share-their-stories/>

<https://gga.org/child-marriages-until-death/>

VI. USEFUL LINKS

<https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-latest-trends-and-future-prospects/>

(UNICEF)

<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/>

<https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>

(UNICEF initiatives)

<https://www.walkfree.org/news/2025/child-marriage-remains-legal-in-the-united-states-as-global-leaders-backtrack-on-gender-equality/>

(Child marriage in the US)