

what is CHILD MARRIAGE?

Child marriage is defined as a union between two people in which one or both parties are younger than 18 years of age¹. Evidence is showing that the issue of child marriage is widespread and can lead to a lifetime of disadvantage and deprivation².

current statistics on CHILD MARRIAGES

- 1 in 4 girls around the world are married before the age of 18 meaning 15 million girls are married each year before their 18th birthday³.
- If current trends continue an estimated 1.2 billion women will have been married as children by 2050⁴.
- Child marriages are more prevalent in Africa with the continent being host to 15 of the 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage⁵.
- Zimbabwe is also among the countries with the highest prevalence of child marriages estimated at about 31%⁶.

key DRIVERS

Studies have cited key factors that contribute to child marriages as follows:

- poverty⁷, gender discrimination, religious and cultural values⁸.
- orphan hood, family disruption, ill-treatment by guardians and coercion by parents.
- unplanned teenage pregnancies, materialism/consumerism and transactional sex⁹.

1 <https://www.k4health.org/toolkits/youthpolicy/early-marriage-0>
 2 UNICEF, (2016). <http://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>
 3 <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/>
 4 <https://www.savethechildren.net/article/one-girl-under-15-married-every-seven-seconds>
 5 <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/african-union-launches-first-ever-campaign-end-child-marriage/>
 6 UNICEF, (2013) State of the World's Children
 7 Bajracharya, A ND Amin, S. 2010. Poverty, Gender, and Youth Working Paper No. 19. Population Council
 8 <http://www.hrforumzim.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Bulletin-98-Child-marriages.pdf>
 9 Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU), (2015). Marriage in Goromonzi District.



child marriage AND HIV

- Studies have shown that girls who marry at young ages are more likely to marry older men which puts them at increased risk of HIV infection¹⁰;
- Within marriages, the demand for the young wife to reproduce coupled with the power imbalance resulting from age differentials lead to very low condom use.¹¹

10 <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>
 11 Clarke, S et al. 2006. Protecting young women from HIV and AIDS: The case against child and adolescent marriage. International Family Planning Perspectives.

consequences OF CHILD MARRIAGES



The repercussions of marrying as a child affect girls throughout their lives.

- Marriage exposes girls to physical, sexual and emotional violence. Child brides have limited knowledge on health issues and they are less likely to access services such as antenatal care.
- Married girls are often cut off from their peer networks, community activities, and even families, which are a fundamental source of their social and emotional wellbeing. They have to deal with the stigma of being married young.
- Social connectedness is a critical component of resilience while social isolation often leads to poor psychosocial wellbeing.
- Married girls struggle to develop their own independent identities and to assert their own points of view and to make decisions concerning their future and that of their children.
- Child marriage denies the girl children their right to formal education which promotes academic, intellectual and personal growth. Lack of education may also affect their ability to effectively contribute to their own future and that of their family and society. A mother's level of education is closely linked to her children's wellbeing including health and education outcomes.

legal FRAMEWORK



- A constitutional court ruling was made on the 20th January 2016 outlawing child marriages. The ruling however did not criminalise child marriages but simply outlawed them.
- Previously, civil law allowed child marriages as the minimum age for marriage was 16 years for girls and 18 years for boys. However, the provision has been ruled as unconstitutional thereby providing some legal basis for addressing child marriages.
- There is no legislation that prohibits paying or receiving lobola (bride price) for young girls although evidence continues to cite the practice as one of the key drivers of child marriages.

what can be done to end CHILD MARRIAGES IN ZIMBABWE?



- Changing attitudes and behaviours which facilitate child marriages;
- Addressing misconceptions on the role of women and girls in society;
- Engaging community power holders in ending child marriages;
- Providing access to age appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR);
- Supporting re-integration for victims of child marriages and those in marriage (including facilitating their access to second chance education and income generating projects);
- Creating safe spaces where girls can meet and discuss issues that affect them;
- Engaging community leaders, boys and older men to ensure they understand the consequences of child marriage;
- Engaging as well as supporting traditional and religious leaders to promote protection of all girls and boys;
- Increased access to SRH services for teenagers to prevent teenage pregnancy;
- Implementing interventions that facilitate communication between caregivers and adolescents on issues of SRHR and HIV;
- Programming that targets men and boys. Programmes should promote positive masculinity and gender equality.

LIST OF MINISTRIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS WORKING ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGES IN ZIMBABWE

- Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- Plan International
- UN Women
- VSO International
- Canadian Embassy
- Shamwari Yemwanasikana
- Padare Enkundleni-Men's Forum
- Childline Zimbabwe
- Katswe Sisterhood
- Network for Empowerment of Women and Girls (NEWAG)
- Real Opportunities for Transformation Support Africa (ROOTS)
- Women's coalitions
- Zimbabwe Women's Lawyers Association
- Shanduko Yeupenyu Child Care