



**MORE THAN
BRIDES
ALLIANCE**

THE MORE THAN BRIDES ALLIANCE-
Accelerating the promises and recognizing
that reproductive health and rights, girls'
empowerment and gender equality are
pathways to sustainable development.



~ GIVE HER A VOICE, CHOICE AND AGENCY ~

**CHILD MARRIAGE IS A SEVERE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
AND A SERIOUS FORM OF CHILD ABUSE.**

APPROXIMATELY

15

million girls
are married every year
before the age of 18



MORE THAN

700

million women
alive today were married
before their 18th birthday¹

**THE MORE THAN BRIDES ALLIANCE (MTBA) WORKS IN DIVERSE SETTINGS
WHERE THE PREVALENCE OF CHILD MARRIAGE IS HIGH.**

MALI,

despite recent declines
in early marriage,
still has more than half
of women married in
ADOLESCENCE.

59.6%

of women aged
20-24 report being
MARRIED² BY AGE

18

NIGER

has the highest rate of
child marriage
IN THE WORLD:

3 IN 4

girls marry before their
18TH BIRTHDAY³

76%

MALAWI

has one of the
**HIGHEST RATES OF
CHILD MARRIAGE**
in Southern Africa
with certain
areas displaying a
disproportionate
burden.⁴

PAKISTAN,
where

21.0%

of women 20-24 report
**BEING MARRIED⁵ BY
AGE 18**

This has seen a decline
of ten percentage points
since 1990-1991,
there is still much work
to be done.

INDIA,

where child marriage
has been declining,
still has the highest
number of child brides
in the world.

More than

10

million

WOMEN AGED
20 to 24 years old
were married⁶ before
THE AGE OF

15



1. UNICEF 2014
2. Mali DHS 2012
3. Niger DHS 2012
4. Malawi DHS 2015/16
5. Pakistan DHS 2012/13 and 1990/1991
6. India DHS 2015/16

Child marriage is driven by a complex set of interlinked factors which appear sometimes as both causes and consequences, including **poverty**, other harmful **traditional and social norms and practices** (such as initiation rights, circumcision), **gender inequality** and **inadequate access** to (comprehensive sexuality) education and adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and services. Early marriage often marks an end to formal schooling (Delprato et al 2015). Girls married early often have lower education levels, are less literate (Nguyen and Wodon, 2014), and have limited skills compare to their unmarried peers (Unicef 2011). They also tend to have large age differences with their partners, which influences their decision-making abilities (Mensch et al 1998). Girls who are married early are likely to become young mothers, which carries increased risk of difficulties in childbirth and risks to both mother and child (Erulkar 2013).



Together these factors limit girls' engagement in livelihoods opportunities which can have lasting effects on their agency and ability to make decisions about their own lives (Chaaban and Cunningham, 2011). Some research suggests that solutions to reduce child marriage should focus on alternative pathways for girls, through education and livelihoods opportunities, to give girls and their parents examples of what an alternative to early marriage looks like in those communities. Research on the power of role models and knowledge of alternatives (Jensen & Oster 2009; Jensen 2012; Beaman et al 2009) suggests that in the absence of these alternatives, the normal pathway - early marriage for many of these girls - is the only viable option. Recent research also suggests that interventions that provide girls with skills-based training can also have a significant positive effect on reducing child marriage within a community (Amin et al, 2016).

THE MORE THAN BRIDES ALLIANCES COMMITMENT:

The MTBA members, Save the Children Netherlands, Oxfam Novib, Simavi Population Council and local partners bring together complementary knowledge, skills, and experience to implement and evaluate programmes to delay marriage in a variety of contexts. MTBA draws from a widespread network, including established country offices, memberships, and long-term collaboration with strong local partners to deliver meaningful engagement with girls and communities.

The MTBA approach works to improve girls' wellbeing and asserts that girls should have a voice, choice, and agency when it comes to deciding about when and whom to marry. MTBA offers girls alternate pathways to marriage and childbearing as an essential component to empowering girls. We work to change communities and create these pathways by elevating the status of over 60,000 girls in more than 900 communities in India, Malawi, Mali, Niger and Pakistan. We know the power of adolescent girls and this is why we address child, early and forced marriage and commit to strive for:



Developing and using actionable evidence to understand how context and culture influence child marriage and tailor and improve programmes on the ground;



Seeking opportunities to scale up and reach more girls and working within existing structures to institutionalize effective approaches;



Strengthen local leaders in Niger, Mali, Malawi, Pakistan and India by provide innovative methods and tools, to be able to improve programmatic work on the ground.



Raise priority in policy spaces for offering appropriate alternative pathways to child marriage, by utilizing key moments and put/ keep this topic on the national, regional and global agendas;



Share experiences and evidence from our programmes from local level to international level and bring international obligations, commitments, and evidence of countries from international spaces and mechanisms back to national and local level.



CALL TO ACTION

We invite governments, national and international and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other actors to work to accelerate the promises and living up to the 1994 programme of Action of International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and other key global human rights and policy documents. Our call to action:

- Put girls at the center; support programmes tailored to the local context, and identify and share information about promising approaches.
- When implementing strategies to address early marriage, consider what alternative pathways exist for girls within their communities and how to expand opportunities for alternate pathways viable options for girls in lieu of marriage.
- Acknowledge the limitation of laws alone to end child marriage and work to support legal frameworks that elevate the value of girls. Moreover, support implementation of policies and actions addressing changing social norms related to child marriage.

Although an increasing number of countries has adapted their legal frameworks to increase the minimum age to get married to 18, or have limited the exceptions to the legal age, in reality a large number of girls are still getting married while under-aged. Although laws may be useful in deterring some marriages and changing the social environment in which these marriages occur, thereby changing social norms about what is acceptable regarding marriage for adolescents, legislation on child marriage does not always reflect international human rights standards. Most countries have policies and action plans addressing child marriage, however they are not always comprehensive. Implementation of policies and action plans is often inadequate, which is reflected in a lack of resource allocation to address child marriage and inadequate structures for implementation. Systems to monitor the implementation of laws and policies are often absent or not functioning. Lack of a well-functioning birth and marriage registration system also hampers enactment of laws.

- Invest in ending child marriage to improve the status of girls, their communities, and their countries' development.

The impacts and economic costs associated with child marriage are high. Child marriage has substantial impacts on women's potential earnings and productivity. These impacts are largely due to the fact that by curtailing girls' educational attainment, child marriage reduces their expected earnings in adulthood. When aggregated to the national level, the monetary value of these effects is significant, with countries foregoing on average about one percent of their earnings base due to child marriage. Child marriage also undermines educational and health initiatives: when girls get married early they have worse educational and health outcomes than unmarried peers. This suggests that investing to end child marriage is not only the right thing to do, but also makes sense from an economic point of view (World Bank, 2017).



The More than Brides Alliance (MTBA) was initiated in 2015 by Save the Children Netherlands (lead), Oxfam Novib, Simavi and Population Council. In partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs this alliance is implementing the programme 'Marriage: No Child's Play' (2016-2020). The aim of the five-year programme is to reduce child marriage and its adverse effects on young women and girls in India, Pakistan, Malawi, Niger, and Mali.



The collective strength and experience of the four organisations enables us to develop a unique, comprehensive, holistic approach to address child marriage.



Save the Children

Save the Children

Netherlands is key player in the field of children's rights and girls' empowerment and brings an extensive network of Save the Children organisations in 120 countries.



OXFAM

Oxfam Novib brings a wealth of experience in the field of women's rights and gender equality as well as an extensive network of Oxfam organisations and partners in over 90 countries.



POPULATION COUNCIL
Ideas. Evidence. Impact.

Population Council brings decades of experience on research with adolescents including on what works to delay marriage, as well as related population and development issues.



Simavi is a health organisation specialised in WASH and SRHR with over 90 years of experience working with communities, providing them services and bringing their stories to the attention of the public and authorities.

WWW.MORETHANBRIDES.ORG



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands