

# Stop Trafficking!

# Awareness Advocacy Action

Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter • March 2021 • Vol. 19 • No. 3

*FOCUS: This month's newsletter explores forced marriage and child brides and the intersection of human trafficking.*

## Forced Marriage is Human Trafficking

Forced marriage is when one or both participants are married without consent or are too young to legally give consent. Forced marriage occurs due to emotional and financial threats, pressure, or coercion. Therefore, usually one or both participants do not have the chance or power to consent.

All types of human trafficking involve force, fraud, and coercion. Forced marriage is considered involuntary servitude under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 definition of human trafficking. The TVPA defines involuntary servitude as a "condition of servitude induced by means of any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process." Since forced marriage occurs due to threats, pressure, or coercion, where one or both participants do not or cannot consent, forced marriage is human trafficking.

Children in forced marriages are coerced into these unions. They are forced to engage in acts akin to victims of sex and labor trafficking. Moreover, some child marriages have slave-like characteristics similar to those of child trafficking.

Despite international conventions and corresponding regional conventions and national legislation and the efforts of numerous non-governmental, faith-based and international organizations, many girls, especially in developing countries, are still trafficked and subjected to forced and early marriages.



## Child Marriage

### What is child marriage?

Child marriage is a legal marriage or informal union where one or both parties are children under 18 years old. While child marriage is far more likely to happen to girls, in some countries, it is not uncommon for boys to also marry before the age of 18. More often than not, a younger girl is married to an older man.

### Where does child marriage occur?

Child marriage occurs globally, most often in developing nations. UNICEF estimates that 11% of women worldwide were married before reaching the age of 15. About 40% of child brides live in South Asia, mainly due to the large population and that child marriage has been deeply rooted in their culture there for centuries. Child marriage also is common in sub-Saharan Africa because of the population growth in that area. Niger, in sub-Saharan Africa, has the highest rate of child marriage globally. About 76% of girls there are married before they reach 18 years old. In neighboring countries, Mali and Chad, over 50% of

all girls marry before their 18th birthday. Globally, one-third of all child brides live in India. The country has the largest number of children who marry before they turn 18. However, India is making real progress in ending child marriage, especially for girls under age 15.

Most countries specify a minimum age for people to legally marry. However, even in countries where there are laws to prevent child marriage, the laws are rarely enforced, and there are always exceptions to the rule. Children are often allowed to marry as long as there is parental consent, regardless of their age. Child marriages are almost universally banned, yet they happen 33,000 times a day, every day, all around the world—cutting across countries, cultures, religions, and ethnicities.

### Why does child marriage occur?

Poverty is a root cause of child marriage and it is also an ongoing consequence. Child marriage is allowed for various reasons; however, it is most closely linked with low levels of economic development. It occurs most often in communities where women and girls are seen as less of a value than boys; financial burdens to their families, not as wage earners.

# Awareness

Giving over a child to marriage means one less mouth to feed. Girls are sometimes married to pay a debt or to settle conflicts. Typically, the younger the girl, the higher the bride price or a lower dowry is paid by the girl's family. For the girls, it traps them and their children into a lifetime of economic disadvantage.

In some societies, child marriage is influenced by norms and beliefs or could be political. Marriages are arranged to build or strengthen ties between tribes or communities. Marriage is also nothing more than a phase of womanhood; the logical next steps for a girl once menstruation begins. Younger girls may also be perceived as more easily shaped into an obedient wife.

In many cultures, parents marry off their young girls to ensure she is a virgin at marriage, avoiding the shame of having a daughter who becomes pregnant out of wedlock and unfit for marriage. In communities at war, child marriage can be seen as a way for families to protect their daughters. It may be safer for them to have a husband if displaced from their homes.

## Why is child marriage harmful?

Child marriage compromises a girl's development and severely limits her opportunities in life. Girls are separated from family and friends during a critical stage of their lives. They're expected to take on the role of a grown woman, rather than going to school and playing. Child marriage can significantly impact a girl's ability to continue with her education. Many girls are forced to drop out of school to focus on domestic responsibilities or to raise children of her own.

Moreover, parents may decide not to educate a girl feeling that it is unnecessary for her in life as a wife and mother. Girls who have no education are three times more likely to marry before 18 than girls who attend school. When girls have access to education, they develop the knowledge and confidence to make important life decisions for themselves — including if, when, and whom to marry.

As children, many of the girls are not physically and emotionally prepared to become mothers. Complications in pregnancy and childbirth remain the leading cause of death globally among girls ages 15 to 19.

In 2015, one in three women in the world married as children. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals' target date for all countries to end child marriage is 2030. If child marriage



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continues at the 2015 rate, by 2030, there will be 960 million women alive who married as children.

## When is child marriage considered slavery?

According to Antislavery.org the website of one of the oldest international human rights organizations in the world, child marriage can be referred to as slavery if one or more of the following elements are present:

1. The child has not genuinely given their free and informed consent to enter the marriage. If the child is subjected to control and a sense of "ownership" in the marriage, particularly through abuse and threat. If the child is exploited by being forced to undertake domestic chores either within or outside her home, and/or engage in non-consensual sexual relations.
2. If the child cannot realistically leave or end the marriage, leading potentially to a lifetime of slavery. Many children have little or no control over their movements or person within marriage, including over sexual relations. Girls, in particular, are commonly controlled through violence, threats, and humiliation, as well as experiencing isolation and loneliness.
3. Children are not able to leave their marriage. For example, they may not be able to support themselves financially or may fear repercussions from in-laws and the wider community, as well as their own families. Girls who leave their marriages without support are often vulnerable to other forms of slavery and exploitation.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

## Child Marriage in the United States

In Florida, an eleven-year-old girl was forced to marry her 20-year-old rapist to avoid impending rape charges. The young girl ended up pregnant as a result of the rape. Her family felt the simplest way to avoid a messy criminal case was to organize a wedding. The marriage ended in divorce, leaving the girl, a single teenage mother with young children to care for and only an elementary school education.

In the United States, child marriage is legal in 46 states. More than 200,000 children as young as 12 were married between 2000 and 2015; most were girls married to an adult male. Child marriage in the United States transcends religion, geography, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Girls as young as 12 in Virginia, 13 in New Hampshire, and 14 in Alabama can legally wed with a parent's signature. Delaware and New Jersey in 2018 became the first two states to end this human-rights abuse, followed by American Samoa in 2018 and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota in 2020. In Tennessee, a law prohibits anyone under the age of 17 from marrying and

anyone under 18 from marrying someone who is four or more years older.

Thousands of young girls in the United States pushed into marriages suffer the same consequences as those in developing countries: lack of education, negative effects on health, and an increased likelihood of domestic violence. Girls who marry before 18 are three times more likely to be beaten by their spouses than women who wed at 21 or older.

If a girl is under 18, she is often too young to get a driver's license, sign an apartment lease or get a full-time job. A girl trying to escape an abusive or difficult domestic situation does not legally have an option or access social services without a parent or guardian's consent. If she tries to leave her husband, she cannot legally obtain counsel to handle her divorce case or file paperwork without the consent of her guardian—which is often the husband she is trying to leave. If the girl's parents refuse to help her, she is often stuck in an unhappy or violent marriage until she reaches 18 years old.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

## Trafficking into China for Forced Marriage

China's former one-child policy and the preference for male children have created a gender imbalance that drives the demand for forced marriage between Chinese men and young girls and women from Southeast Asia, Africa, and other countries throughout the world. Chinese men often go into debt to pay marriage brokers and to pay off the debt "husbands" will force their "wives" into prostitution or domestic servitude. Some men will also transfer them to a new husband in exchange for money. So many of these girls and women are trafficked twice, first by the marriage broker into a forced marriage and then by the husband.

The traffickers act with impunity. If a girl or young woman can escape and attempts to report their abuse and trafficking to law enforcement, they receive no assistance nor protective services.

Even worse, some law enforcement will arrest the victims and force them to return to their traffickers, sometimes in exchange for money from the man's family.

Bride trafficking into China and kidnapping and coercion of women into the sex trade through forced marriage to Chinese men is an issue that affects nearly every country around China.

Every country on China's border suffers from the problems that are inherent inside China due to Chinese government policies to control everything, including the reproductive cycles of the people of China. Women and young girls from surrounding countries living in poverty are sold or pressured by their families, and in some cases, pastors, to marry.

The 2020 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report discussed how illicit brokers facilitate "marriages" of South Asian women into China with these brokers receiving fees up to \$30,000. Usually the younger the "bride", the higher the "bride price."

According to the Chinese government's census reporting, from 1996 to 2000, the birth imbalance was 120 boys to every 100 girls born in China. That cohort is now entering marrying age, so the problem is only going to accelerate over time. Another factor is that these "husbands" have a social pressure to take care of their elders. A "wife" will not only produce children but also take care of the household, many women living in domestic servitude. Men in rural, poor communities who do not have the opportunity to find a wife more traditionally are pressured to use a marriage broker, many times a trafficker, to find a wife.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



# Awareness

## Child Marriage Among Boys

Globally, 115 million boys and men were married before age 18. Child marriage among boys is most common in countries that are geographically diverse and differ from the countries in which the practice is most common among girls. While boys who marry in childhood do not face the same risks and consequences as girls due to biological and social differences, the practice is nonetheless a rights violation for children of both sexes. Similar to child brides, child grooms are forced to take on adult responsibilities for which they may not be prepared. The union may bring early fatherhood and result in additional economic pressure in the form of providing for the household; it may also constrain the boy's access to education and opportunities for career advancement.

## COVID's Child Brides

Countries that had made headway against child or forced marriages of girls in recent years have seen the impact of COVID-19 wipe out the progress they had achieved. The United Nations is warning that 13 million more girls will be forced into early marriage over the next decade as families in developing countries, particularly in South Asia and Africa, struggle under the financial hardships of the coronavirus.

Though most child marriages take place in secret, Save the Children estimates in 2020 alone, nearly 500,000 more girls under 18 were married off worldwide, most in Africa and Asia. The economic toll of COVID-19 threatens to set back years of progress in places like Sierra Leone, where the rate of child marriages had plummeted from 56 percent to 39 percent over the past decade. Now there are reports of children as young as 8 years old being offered as brides. In most cases, needy parents receive a dowry for their daughter, such as livestock that can provide income, or cash and the promise to take financial responsibility for the young bride.

India's lockdown to contain the virus in late March 2020 caused millions of impoverished migrants to lose

their jobs. With schools closed and pressure on household finances increasing, marrying off young girls has become a more viable option for reducing expenses.

The ChildLine India counted 5,214 marriages in four months of lockdown between March and June 2020 across India. This is a vast undercount, the organization says, as the majority of cases are not reported.

Before the pandemic, the rate of child marriage in Jordan was about ten percent, much lower than that in the African countries or South Asia. Most of these were among Palestinian and Syrian refugees. UNICEF reports that there has been a significant increase in child marriage in refugee camps since the beginning of the pandemic as families struggle to cope.

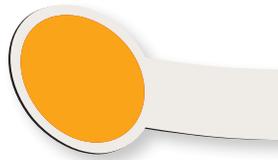
In Sierra Leone, the rate of child marriage dropped from 56% in 2006 to 39% in 2017, which is a major achievement in the eyes of child protection activists. When schools closed due to the pandemic, child marriages accelerated as many village girls who had been attending classes in nearby towns returned home to their parents. Many of the girls' mothers were themselves married off as teenagers and see

early marriage as normal. Since the pandemic started, most marriages don't even include a ceremony at the local mosque or church: Parents accept suitors' proposals and then deliver their daughters to the groom's home.

Sierra Leone's first lady, Fatima Maada Bio, Bio managed to escape to the United Kingdom as a teenager after learning her father intended to marry her off to someone. She has been working to change the mindset that child marriage is permissible with her "Hands Off Our Girls" campaign since her husband took office in 2018. While the billboards with the first lady's image and "Marriage is My Choice; Education is My Right" still line the roadsides, the campaign has had to scale back many of its outreach efforts due to the COVID-19 precautions.

The willingness to sacrifice a daughter underscores the hard lives many young girls have in this part of Africa. They are normally considered household help as children, sent out to gather firewood or water at sunrise, and often the last to eat at mealtime until they are married and then they perform the same chores for her husband and his family.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



## Child Marriage and Trafficking in Bangladesh

*Papiya was forced into marriage at 12 years old. To escape the sexual abuse and violence from her husband and his family, she fled her in-laws' house barefoot in the middle of the night, leaving her sandals by the door so that slap of their soles on the stairs didn't wake her 22-year-old husband. As the sun rose, she spotted a rickshaw driver sleeping by the side of the road and begged him for help. He agreed with a smile, she remembered. Then he drove Papiya to a brothel and sold her for more money than he'd usually make in a month. Now 17, Papiya has been trapped in one of Bangladesh's 11 government-registered, legal brothel villages ever since. Each one enslaves up to 3,000 women and underage girls in sexual servitude that can see them raped up to 11 or 12 times a day. As lines of men jostle through the entry gates and policemen patrol the brothel streets for signs of drugs or disorder, Papiya and her friends lie on their beds in windowless metal cells and self-harm in a last-ditch attempt at temporary escape.*



Bangladesh has the highest rate of marriage involving girls under the age of 15 in the world even though marriage is illegal for girls under the age of 18 (and boys under 21). It is also estimated that close to 200,000 children and young women in the country have been trafficked into prostitution. Traffickers target child brides knowing that they are vulnerable.

In 2017, the nonprofit organization Girls Not Brides funded a study of women in four brothels in Bangladesh. Half of the girls had been married before the age of 18 and believed they had been trafficked into sexual slavery as a direct result. None of the girls came to the brothel consensually. For some, it was their husbands who sold them to the brothels—each man opting to free himself from the constraining role of the babysitter in a marriage in which his child-wife might feasibly sleep with a teddy bear. The girls are sold for about \$3,500.

The majority of the girls escaped their marriages due to sexual violence and abuse by their husband and his family. Many were rejected by their families for the social shame that accompanies a daughter who flees a life of exploitation. Within days, alone at a bus stop or a train station, each girl was approached by a man or woman proffering help and a place to stay for the night. They were drugged and sold to the brothel before they could understand what was going on.

Trafficking and child marriage in Bangladesh are viewed independently of one another by global policymakers as well as the U.S. State Department—and initiatives to end both are kept separate as a result. Child marriage is largely approached by nonprofit organizations through a lens of legislative lobbying and education as prevention. Meanwhile, counter-trafficking efforts center on rescue, rehabilitation, and prosecution. Projects that work to prevent trafficking focus on unmarried girls who are still in school. Approximately 52 percent of girls in Bangladesh are coerced into marriage as children and left without the support they need to protect themselves and safely break out.

The Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association works to provide legal assistance and shelter to abused women across Bangladesh but says they have found themselves struggling to make international donors understand the crossover between underage marriage and modern-day slavery. Funding for their anti-trafficking work has increased since 2017, but little support comes for cases that involve domestic violence or girls who need to flee their marriage. Many believe that if the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons were to consider child marriage when assessing human trafficking in Bangladesh for the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, countertrafficking initiatives would likely be expanded to aid child brides.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

## Interlinkages between Trafficking in Persons and Marriage

In 2020, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime published *Interlinkages between Trafficking in Persons and Marriage*, a report that documents these links and provides steps for governments and other authorities to bring awareness to this issue and take action. Across the world, girls as young as 12 are being forced or tricked into marrying men who exploit them for sex and domestic work, in what the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has called an “under-reported, global form of human trafficking”. This report outlines the legal obligations that nations have to address human trafficking.

Researchers report that through their interviews in nine countries in different parts of the world: Canada, Germany, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Serbia, South Africa, Thailand, and Viet Nam; that the way the crime of human trafficking for the purpose of marriage is committed in different countries is very specific depending on cultural, religious and socioeconomic factors.

These marriages are associated with all phases of human trafficking and, as with other forms of trafficking, only a small proportion of cases are brought to the attention of authorities and are prosecuted. The victims, who are usually young girls and women, find it difficult to ask for help for fear of stigmatization and concern for their families.

The report outlines several policy recommendations to prevent cases of trafficking linked to marriage, identify and protect victims, and prosecute the responsible parties. It offers resources to enable police officers, immigration and health authorities, and social workers to take appropriate action. The report also offers tools for lawyers, prosecutors and judges and outlines relevant international treaties and laws, as well as the legal obligations of States regarding victims’ rights.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

## Child Brides of Climate Change

In the past several years, Kenya has made significant efforts to eliminate child marriage. In 1990, Kenya ratified the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child which prohibits child marriage. Additional Kenyan laws, including the Children’s Act of 2001, the Sexual Offences Act of 2006, and the Marriage Act of 2014, which explicitly prohibits the marriage of children under 18, further criminalized this practice.

In 2013, Kenya’s Ministers of Health and Education committed, along with Ministers from several other African nations, to ending child marriage by the end of 2020. Kenya’s efforts have worked to some extent: the number of young women between 20 and 24 years of age who were married before their 18th birthday dropped from 34% in 1994 to 23% in 2016, the most recent year for which accurate data are available.

However, climate change has given rise to a resurgence of child marriage, especially in northern Kenya which has experienced frequent droughts and a plague of locusts. Livestock, which serves as the economic backbone to these rural and farming communities, are dying of hunger, thirst, and disease. Desperate families are taking their daughters

out of school and offering them in marriage in exchange for dowries, mainly consisting of milk and livestock.

A report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the United States Agency for International Development released in January 2020 and the June 2020 report released by the United Nations Population Fund found that in times of crisis and displacement, such as drought, there is a higher prevalence of child marriage. Mohamed Abdullahi, the head of the United Nations International Children’s Fund Kenya’s northeast office, reports that cases of child marriage have increased in the country as a result of “man-made and natural disasters, specifically drought.”

The Kenyan government has been trying to fight back. In recent months, the federal government has tasked local law enforcement and officials with taking action when child marriages occur in their local area. However, many of the local officials and police come from the same tribes as the families of the brides and grooms, and so turn a blind eye to child marriages.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

## Efforts to Abolish Child Marriage

Girls' rights activists from around the world are lobbying their governments to outlaw the practice and put an end to child marriage everywhere.

### Policy Change in Latin America

In Honduras, 34 percent of girls are married before the age of 18. With the advocacy efforts of young women, Congress recently outlawed child marriage in the country and raised the minimum marriage age from 16 to 18, removing all exceptions—including parental permission.

This success in Honduras followed the recent closing of a legal loophole in the Dominican Republic that had previously allowed children under 18 to marry with parental consent.

### Malawian Girls Enlist Support of First Lady

Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, with approximately half of all girls married by the age of 18. Advocates working with Plan International presented the First Lady of Malawi

with a petition of 42,000 signatures rejecting the practice. In February 2017, the law was amended to ban all marriages for girls under 18—even when there is parental consent.

### Wedding Busters in Bangladesh

In some societies, child marriage is deeply entrenched in their customs and can take time to eliminate even when the law changes. In Bangladesh, the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 for women and 21 for men. However, a legal loophole known as the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed in February 2017 that permits marriages in “special circumstances,” when there is consent from parents in conjunction with magistrates. This effectively makes child marriage legal if it is considered in the “best interest” of the girl involved—leaving many concerned that young girls could be forced to marry their abusers. In Bangladesh, 52 percent of girls are married before 18, and both poverty and dowry are driving factors for early marriage,

as costs often increase the older a girl gets. Financial pressure means that girls from poorer families are more likely to become child brides. However, young activists are taking action. With the support of Plan International, girls' rights campaigners have been visiting parents to explain the negative impacts child marriage has on girls, emphasizing the importance of the education of girls and helping to secure “child-marriage-free zones” in the country.

Even when legal success is achieved, young campaigners are proving vital to the global effort to eliminate child marriage in places where deeply embedded cultural beliefs might otherwise allow it to continue. When girls are given the power to make an informed choice about marriage, they marry later. Laws are an important first step, but programs are also needed to empower girls with information about their rights and educate parents about the benefits of keeping their daughters in school.

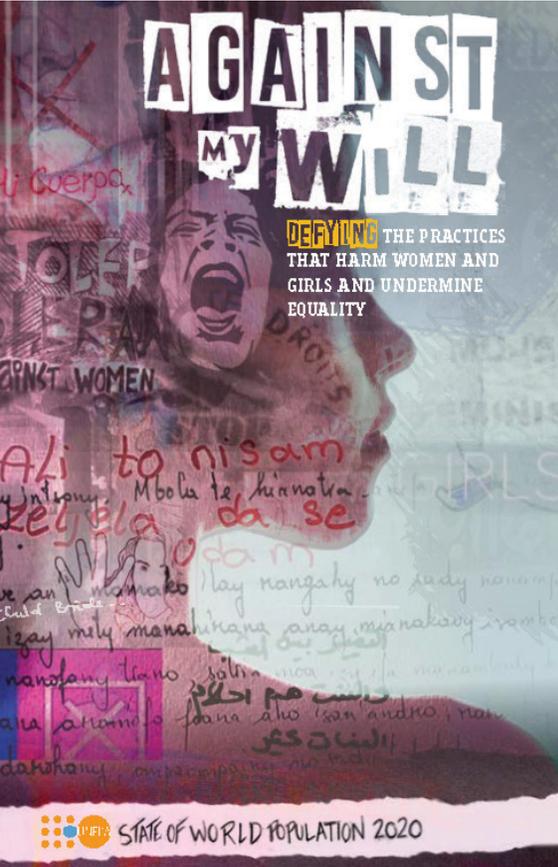
To read more about the efforts of Plan International, please click [here](#).

## International Conventions Regarding Child Marriage

Child marriage is addressed in several international conventions and agreements. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women covers the right to protection from child marriage in article 16, which 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...” The right to ‘free and full’ consent to marriage is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says that consent cannot be ‘free and full’ when one of the parties involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner.

Although marriage is not mentioned directly in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, child marriage is linked to other rights – such as the right to freedom of expression, the right to protection from all forms of abuse, and the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices – and is frequently addressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Other international agreements related to child marriage are the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



## Undermining Equality

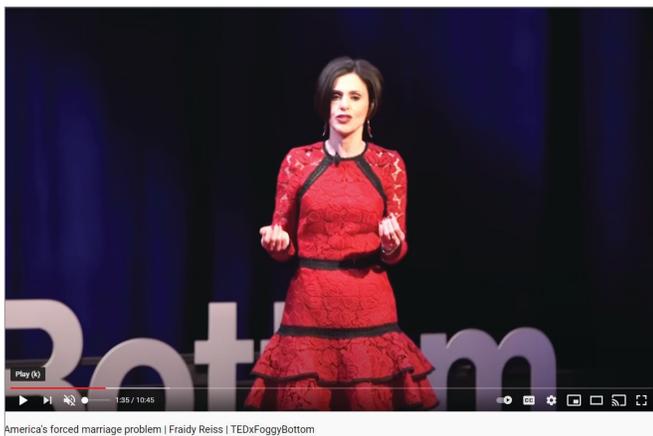
A June 2020 report from the United Nations Population Fund (NFP), *State of the World Population: Defying the Practices that Harm Women and Girls and Undermine Equality*, found that most girl child brides around the world leave school and immediately begin having children. Most child brides have no choice in the matter: In Kenya, only 56% of women and girls make their own decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, including when to have children, and how many. Globally, girls who are forced to marry young face higher risks of pregnancy-related death due to early, poorly spaced, and multiple pregnancies and childbirth. Child brides are also more vulnerable to domestic violence, social isolation, and depression.

The report stresses that it is not only the child brides who suffer from the effects of early marriage. As the girls are prevented from attaining an education it is economically detrimental to the country as a whole as these girls cannot contribute to the nation's workforce. A 2017 World Bank study found that if child marriage were eradicated, developing economies could save trillions of dollars by 2030.

Globally, an estimated 33,000 underage girls are married off each day. The harm that child marriage causes to communities and entire nations is still being assessed, but as global temperatures rise and there are more extreme weather events, girls will be increasingly vulnerable to being married off young unless governments, organizations, and activists intervene. Girls who are married early are also more likely to perpetuate stereotypical gender roles and to transmit these norms to their children.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

## Action



## America's Forced Marriage Problem

Forced and child marriage seem like problems that don't exist in America, but, marriage under the age of 18 is legal in all 50 states. After escaping her own forced marriage, activist Fraidy Reiss is working to help women and girls close the legal loopholes around these marriages for good.

Fraidy Reiss is an activist who is recognized internationally as an expert on forced and child marriage in America, drawing inspiration from her own abusive forced marriage.

After realizing that most women and girls trying to flee or resist arranged and forced marriages are limited by finances, religious law and social customs, she founded the organization 'Unchained At Last' to help women successfully start new lives. Her writing on the subject has been published in the New York Times, Washington Post and countless other publications in the US and beyond, and she has been interviewed and featured by those outlets as well as Financial Times, BBC, PBS, NPR, CBS, and others. Reiss has also assisted in the creation of legislation to end and reduce child marriage which has been introduced and, in some cases, already passed in multiple US states. Please click [here](#) to view this TED talk.

## 629 Brides Trafficked Into China



629 girls and women from largely impoverished families across Pakistan were sold to China as “brides.” Pakistani investigators blame China and its ambassador in Pakistan for neglecting trafficking networks. Please click [here](#) to view this 2-minute video.

## Speaking Frankly: Child Marriage

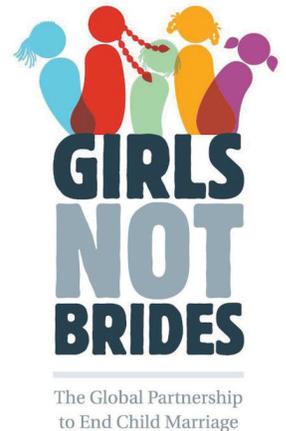


Advocates are working hard to change the child marriage laws, citing statistics that minors who marry are significantly more likely to suffer from poverty, abuse, and health issues throughout their lives. But these advocates are running into some surprising opposition – on both sides of the political spectrum. Please click [here](#) to view “Speaking Frankly: Child Marriage,” a 23-minute documentary.

## Difret: The Film Petitioning the US to End Child Marriage

When Aberash was 14 years old, she was kidnapped for marriage. She was taken to a hut, locked up, and assaulted by her would-be husband. She knew she had to fight back. When she received another visit from her abductor, she saw her chance. She grabbed the gun he had left leaning against the wall and ran out of the door. Chased by her husband and his friends, she shot him.

Aberash was accused of murder and, after 2 years in court, the judge ruled that she had acted in self-defense. Her trial set a precedent and made it possible to outlaw bride kidnapping in Ethiopia. Click [here](#) to view the trailer for the film.



## Trafficked into Marriage in India



Decades of sex selection favoring male babies have left some Indian states with vastly more men than women, creating a lucrative and growing market for traffickers. In the patriarchal and feudal state of Haryana where there’s a shortage of women to marry, it’s normal for men to buy young girls trafficked from

other states. Known as “paros”, a term implying they can be purchased, they are regularly raped, forced into marriages, and made to work as bonded labor. Their uneducated families are often tricked into agreeing to send them away, lured by the idea of a happy marriage for their daughters. But tragically, there is no “happily ever after”. Click [here](#) to view this 26- minute video.

## The Girls You Have Destroyed



The song/poem *The Girls You Have Destroyed*, about child marriage in the U.S., was intended to be performed flash-mob style at statehouses across the nation.

Coronavirus changed those plans. Instead *The Girls You Have Destroyed* in #LockDownRiseUp style, may be viewed via this video featuring child marriage survivors across the U.S. — each who filmed herself. Please share this video with your legislators, by email or on social media. Click [here](#).

# Action

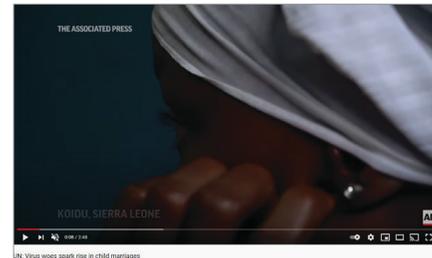


**moving victims of violence from crisis to confidence**

## Safe Horizon's Anti-Trafficking Program

offers comprehensive legal and social services to anyone who has been trafficked, including victims of forced marriage. If you or someone you know is in a forced marriage and would like to access support and services, please call their intake line at 718-943-8652. Help is available [here](#).

## Hands Off Our Girls



Please click [here](#) to view a 3-minute video of Sierra Leone's first lady on her "Hands Off Our Girls" campaign. Scroll down to view the video.

## A Survivor's Plea to End Child Marriage

Payzee Mahmood was a normal teenager, idolizing pop stars and pursuing her education. But her childhood was stolen from her when, at just 16 years old, her parents coerced her into marrying a much older man. Lacking the knowledge, power and language to protest the marriage, Payzee hoped another adult or professional in her life would intervene, help her and stop the marriage. Tragically the marriage went ahead and Payzee turned to self-harm and small acts of rebellion, to try and escape. But then everything changed.



Her sister Banaz left her own abusive child marriage and moved back in with their parents. In January 2006, after months of rumors and death threats, Banaz went missing. Three months later, her body was found in Birmingham - her father, her uncle and 3 other Kurdish men were tried and sentenced to life imprisonment. When Payzee turned 18, she got divorced and arranged Banaz's funeral — all in the same month.

Now she is speaking out on behalf of herself, her sister Banaz, and every child at risk of child marriage, to demand that the current law in England and Wales which shockingly allows marriage from 16 with parental consent is changed and that child marriage under the age

of 18 becomes a crime. A survivor of child marriage, who lost her sister Banaz in a tragic "honor" killing, Payzee's focus to prevent so called "honor" based abuse and child marriage could not be more personal.

A Kurdish immigrant, raised in London, with a successful career in the fashion industry, she uses her voice to speak out as a survivor – not a victim – and has made it her mission to be a changemaker, helping to tackle these harmful practices. As an IKWRO ambassador and campaigner, her story and experiences have reached international audiences, including the Kurdish community. She has spoken widely on the need for changes to the laws surrounding child marriage and "honor" based abuse across radio, television and newspapers and met with government officials and the Home Office to explain first-hand why change is needed to finally make child marriage a crime. This talk was given at a TEDx event using the TED conference format but independently organized by a local community. Click [here](#) to view this powerful TED talk.



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