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World Vision



IMPACT NEWSLETTER

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#EndChildMarriage

World Vision



It takes a world
to end violence against children

CHILD MARRIAGE

1. What is child marriage?

Child marriage is a deeply concerning practice involving the formal or informal union of individuals, one or both of whom are children under the age of 18. Although it affects both genders, girls are disproportionately impacted, often marrying older individuals. It robs these young individuals of their childhood, forcing them into adult roles and responsibilities prematurely.

For example, In rural Bangladesh, a 14-year-old girl named Amina was married off to a 30-year-old man. She was forced to leave school and assume household responsibilities, effectively ending her childhood.

THIS ISSUE

Child Marriage

PAGE 02

Interesting
Facts

PAGE 03

PAGE 04

ACTIONABLE
ITEMS

PAGE 05

Child Marriage



Where Does Child Marriage Happen?

Child marriage is not limited to specific regions or countries; it is a global issue. Surprisingly, even in developed countries like Canada, child marriage persists, with thousands of cases documented between 2000 and 2018. In developing nations, especially those experiencing fragility, child marriage is alarmingly prevalent. Countries like Niger and India have particularly high rates. Even in places with legal restrictions, enforcement is often lacking. In Canada, between 2000 and 2018, over 3,600 marriage certificates were issued to children under 18. This includes cases like Sarah, a 16-year-old Canadian girl who was married to a 25-year-old man.

Why Does Child Marriage Happen?

Child marriage's root causes are multifaceted. It is most closely associated with low economic development, as impoverished families may see it as a way to reduce financial burdens. In societies where dowries are customary, marrying girls off at a younger age can be financially advantageous. Additionally, tradition, family honor, and political or survival strategies play roles in perpetuating child marriage.

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Why Is Child Marriage so Harmful?

Child marriage has devastating consequences for the affected individuals. Education is often the first casualty, with girls being forced to drop out of school to fulfill domestic roles or raise children. Lack of education perpetuates the cycle of poverty. Health is also a major concern, with young girls ill-prepared for pregnancy and childbirth, resulting in higher maternal and infant mortality rates. Child brides often lack knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, making them vulnerable to domestic violence and exploitation.

What has the impact of COVID-19 been on child marriage?

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem of child marriage. Economic hardships have led some families to view child marriage as a means of reducing household expenses. Furthermore, it has become a strategy to earn income or access loans in informal dowry-based economies. Estimates suggest that millions more girls may be forced into marriage due to the pandemic. In India during the COVID-19 pandemic, economic hardships led to an increase in child marriages. Priya, a 15-year-old Indian girl, was married off by her parents due to financial difficulties caused by the pandemic.

What is World Vision doing to help end child marriage?

World Vision is actively engaged in addressing child marriage through various initiatives. They focus on promoting gender equality, empowering girls through education and opportunities, and engaging entire communities to raise awareness about the value of girls and their rights. Programs extend to maternal and child health, with efforts to educate communities on birth spacing, contraception, and supporting women during pregnancy and motherhood. The Raw Hope program provides protection to vulnerable children living in unstable countries where governments are unable or unwilling to safeguard their rights. In a rural community in Zambia, World Vision initiated a program to educate families about the negative effects of child marriage. Nilanjona's parents, influenced by this program, decided to allow her to continue her education instead of marrying her off at a young age.

In Afghanistan, many girls are married off as young as 12, and they face severe health risks. One such girl, Amina, had complications during childbirth at 14, resulting in her and her baby's health being in jeopardy.



World Vision uOttawa Mission

To provide UO students from all background, skills, and interests an opportunity to drive change, advocate, and amplify the voices of children fighting for human rights and justice globally.

ACTIONABLE ITEMS

HOW CAN YOU HELP ?

Individuals can contribute to ending child marriage by addressing its root causes, such as poverty and injustice. Sponsoring a girl can provide her with essential necessities, including education and healthcare. Supporting programs like Raw Hope helps protect children in the most dangerous and unstable contexts. Advocating for policy changes to enforce laws against child marriage, challenging harmful social norms, and creating safe spaces for girls to voice their concerns are also vital steps in the fight against child marriage. Global cooperation is crucial to achieving the goal of ending child marriage by 2030, enabling girls to pursue their dreams and live free from this harmful practice.

