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CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDONESIA:
PROGRESS ON PAUSE

On July 20, 2016 Statistics Indonesia (BPS), supported by UNICEF, launched two new reports analyzing data on child marriage in Indonesia. *Progress on Pause: An Analysis of Child Marriage Data in Indonesia,* analyzes child marriage prevalence trends between 2008 and 2012. *Child Marriage in Indonesia (2013 and 2015),* presents child marriage prevalence data for 2013 and 2015[1], as well as information on health and social protection. Both reports analyze yearly data from Indonesia's National Socioeconomic Survey (SUSENAS).[2] The survey is conducted annually and covers a nationally representative sample of roughly 200,000 Indonesian households.

BACKGROUND

Child marriage has garnered significant global attention in the last decade in response to growing evidence on the scale and scope of the problem and is now specifically targeted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). An estimated 14.2 million girls worldwide marry before the age of 18 each year.[3] Over 700 million women alive today were once child brides, and one in three of these girls married before the age of 15.[4] Indonesia is part of the top countries with the highest absolute numbers of child marriage, the child marriage burden, ranking seventh globally.[5] In 2012, 1,348,886 girls married before the age of 18, equal to 3,695 girls per day. Of these girls, 292,663 married before 16 and 110,198 before 15.

Child marriage is a fundamental violation of girls' human rights. It limits girls' education, health, future income, safety, agency and abilities. It also restricts their status and roles in both the home and in society. The practice is largely driven by poverty and social norms that are rooted in the lower status of women and girls.

Girls who marry early face devastating risks to their health and well-being. Pregnancy-related deaths are one of the leading causes of deaths among girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide. Married girls are more likely to experience abuse and domestic violence and are often unable to effectively negotiate safer sex, leaving themselves vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Married girls also have poorer educational and economic prospects, which reinforces their lower status and limits their ability to lift themselves and their future families out of poverty. These effects are passed onto their children, continue into future generations, and serves as a drain on social and economic growth; according to one estimate, child marriage in Indonesia caused a loss of at least 1.7 per cent of GDP in 2014.[6]

Under the 1974 Marriage Law that sets the legal parameters for marriage in Indonesia, parental consent is required for all marriages under the age of 21. With parental consent, females can legally marry at the age of 16 and males at 19. Parents can petition the religious court or district court for an exemption for their daughter to marry even earlier, with no minimum age limit.[7] A recent study on dispensation (exemption) requests in three districts (Tuban, Bogor and Mamuju) identifies average approval ratings for marriage dispensation around 95 per cent.[8]

The Marriage Law not only fails to meet the age 18 threshold for marriage recommended by International Human Rights Treaty Bodies, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it contradicts Indonesia's own 2002 Law on Child Protection, which prohibits marriage under the age of 18 under any circumstances. It also sets the minimum marriage age lower for girls than boys, even though girls are more vulnerable to the harmful consequences of child marriage.[9]

FINDINGS FROM NEW RESEARCH IN INDONESIA

The report, *Progress on Pause: An Analysis of Child Marriage Data in Indonesia*, examines factors associated with child marriage such as education, geographic location and economic status. These findings have been updated with data from *Child Marriage in Indonesia (2013 and 2015)*. Additionally, it analyzes 2008 to 2012 SUSENAS[10], and 2010 Population Census data presents prevalence rates at the provincial, district and sub-district levels and identifies where the practice is most widespread. To examine child marriage prevalence, SUSENAS data analyzes the sample of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 married before the age of 18. Based on these analyses, the report identified five findings:

1. **Child marriage prevalence in Indonesia has plateaued and remains persistently high:**
   The child marriage rate in Indonesia remains high, with over one in four girls currently marrying before reaching adulthood. Furthermore, the rate has plateaued in recent years. Figure 1 shows that since 2008 the child marriage rate has remained relatively stable around 25 per cent, having declined only slightly from 27.4 per cent in 2008 to 22.8 per cent in 2015.

   Marriage among girls below the age of 15 declined slightly during the same time period (from 3.0 per cent to 1.1 per cent) with rural areas accounting for most of this decrease. This decline occurred in approximately three-quarters of Indonesian provinces.

Figure 1:
Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 married before age 18, 16 and 15, 2008 to 2015
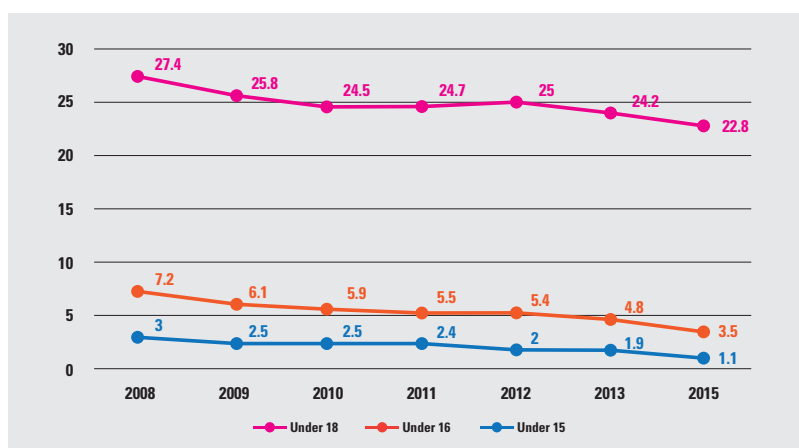
Source: Secondary analysis of SUSENAS 2008-2012, 2013 and 2015

2. **Child marriage is highest amongst girls aged 16 and 17:**
   Marriage of girls under the age of 15 and 16 has shown the largest decline since 2008, whereas marriage among girls aged 16 and 17 has plateaued (accounting for 20.2 per cent of marriages in 2008 and 19.3 per cent of marriages in 2015). This indicates the need for empowerment and protection for girls at or beforethe age of 16, as most girls marrying before 18, marry from 16 onwards.

3. **Child marriage and educational attainment are interlinked:**
   The analysis finds a strong correlation between child marriage and lower levels of educational attainment, as well as later marital age and higher levels of educational attainment. In 2015, girls who marry below the age of 18 are six times less likely to complete upper secondary school compared to girls who marry after the age of 18, indicating that secondary school may provide protection for delaying marriage until girls reach adulthood.

**Table 1: Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 by marital status and educational attainment, 2015**

Age at first marriage	Never attended or did not complete primary school (%)	Completed primary school (%)	Completed junior secondary school (%)	Completed senior secondary school (%)
Below 18	9.9	40.1	41.2	8.9
Above 18	4.5	20.3	29.8	45.4

Source: Secondary analysis of SUSENAS 2015

4. **While poverty makes girls more vulnerable to child marriage, social and cultural acceptance of the practice permeates all economic levels:**
    Analysis shows that child marriage is strongly related to rural residence, poorer housing conditions, and households with lower levels of expenditure, all categories associated with poverty. Child marriage is more than 1.5 times higher in rural compared to urban areas (27.1 per cent and 17.1 per cent respectively in 2015) and this divide has remained constant since 2008.

Figure 2:
Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 married before age 18 residing in urban and rural areas, 2008 to 2015
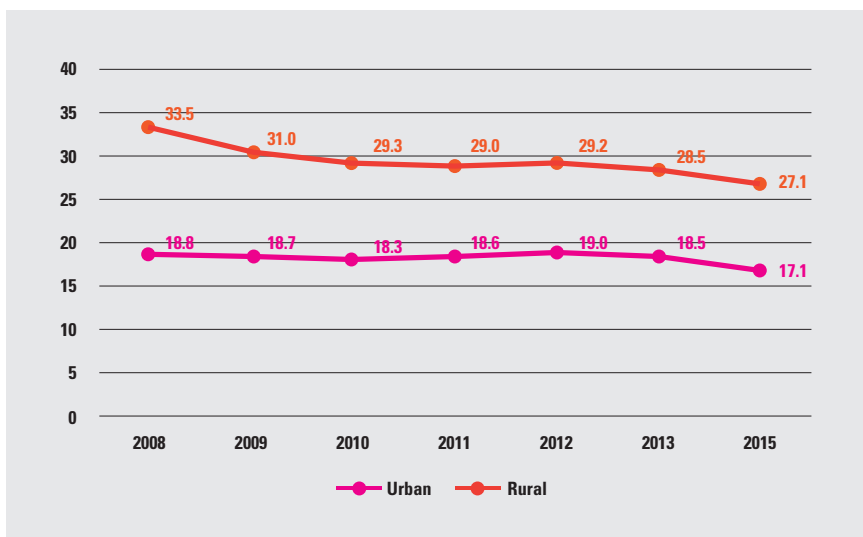
Source: Secondary analysis of SUSENAS 2008-2012, 2013 and 2015

Child marriage rates also increase as housing conditions deteriorate from adequate (21.9 per cent) to inadequate (31.0 per cent) in 2015. Additionally in 2015, girls from households with the lowest levels of expenditure are more than twice as likely to be married than girls from households with the highest levels of expenditure.

Figure 3:
Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 married before age 18 by household level of expenditure, in quintiles, 2015
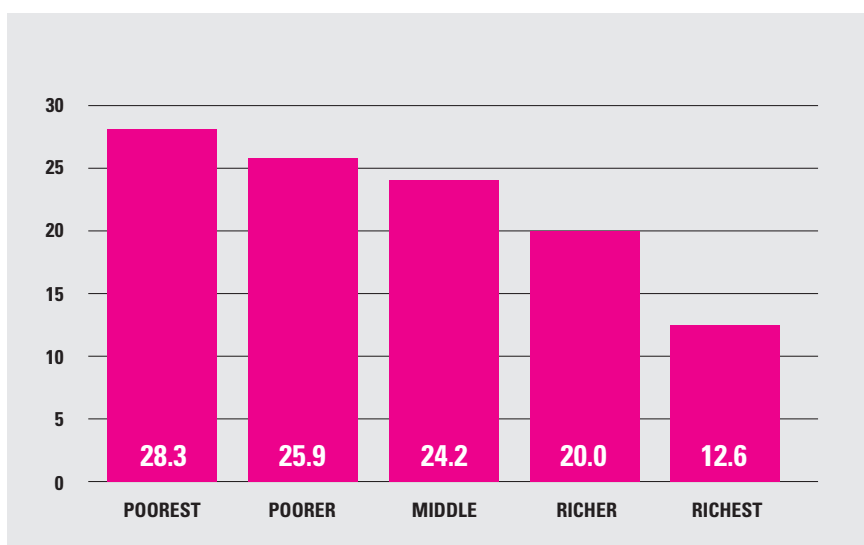
Source: Secondary analysis of SUSENAS 2015

However, the data also indicates that social norms accepting of the practice may be influential among all economic levels in Indonesian society. In 2015, nearly one in eight girls who marry before the age of 18 are from households with the highest levels of expenditure in Indonesia, indicating that financial security provides only limited protection.

5. **Extremely high rates of child and adolescent marriage are found in geographical pockets throughout Indonesia:**

Analysis of geographical data from the 2010 Population Census with SUSENAS found child marriage rates to vary widely across the country and by level of government (provincial, district and sub-district). Some of the sub-districts with the highest prevalence are located in low prevalence districts and provinces, while some low prevalence districts and provinces have large populations resulting in extremely large absolute numbers of girls marrying before the age of 18.

Child marriage prevalence data is available at the provincial level, identifying the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 married before the age of 18 in Indonesia's 33 provinces. In 2015, West Sulawesi and South Kalimantan have the highest prevalence (34.2 per cent and 33.7 per cent respectively), whilst Riau Islands and Aceh have the lowest prevalence (11.7 per cent and 12.4 per cent respectively). On average[11] over the seven year from 2008 to 2015 period (excluding 2014), D.I. Yogyakarta and DKI Jakarta have the lowest prevalence (13.3 per cent and 13.7 per cent respectively) while West Sulawesi and Central Kalimantan have the highest prevalence (36.2 and 35.5 per cent respectively). DKI Jakarta has consistently been part of the five provinces with the lowest prevalence, whereas, West Sulawesi and Central Kalimantan have consistently been part of the top five provinces with the highest prevalence throughout the period.

In 2012, West and East Java had the highest absolute number of girls married before the age of 18 (322,889 and 237,307 respectively), followed by Central Java (146,034). Whereas, Riau Islands, West Papua and D.I Yogyakarta had the lowest absolute number of girls married before the age of 18 (1,882, 5,174 and 5,596 respectively).

A dual approach is required by decision-makers to target both the percentages and scale of child marriage, if Indonesia is to make progress in achieving the new SDG Target 5.3 which aims to eliminate child marriage by 2030.

Table 2: Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 married before age 18 across Indonesia's 33 provinces ranked by average prevalence, 2008-2015

No	Provinces	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2015	Average Prevalence
1	West Sulawesi	40.6	36.0	36.4	36.7	35.5	34.3	34.2	36.2
2	Central Kalimantan	37.5	36.3	34.6	34.9	38.2	33.3	33.6	35.5
3	Central Sulawesi	38.0	37.8	37.2	30.7	32.0	34.7	31.9	34.6
4	South Kalimantan	33.9	32.1	30.1	32.9	34.5	35.6	33.7	33.3
5	Southeast Sulawesi	35.1	32.1	30.7	29.9	31.1	32.5	30.2	31.7
6	Papua	38.2	39.7	33.0	30.1	30.1	26.2	24.1	31.6
7	Gorontalo	32.1	33.9	27.9	31.9	35.3	28.1	26.2	30.8
8	West Kalimantan	28.2	31.1	29.0	30.6	29.9	28.6	32.2	29.9
9	North Sulawesi	34.8	29.9	31.3	29.2	28.0	25.9	28.7	29.7
10	Jambi	32.2	28.9	28.2	31.3	30.9	28.9	25.5	29.4
11	West Java	33.1	30.4	28.0	30.2	30.9	26.7	25.9	29.3
12	Bangka Belitung Islands	29.3	29.9	25.4	28.0	28.6	32.2	25.5	28.4
13	East Kalimantan	29.0	26.4	23.5	23.5	31.1	27.5	31.1	27.4
14	East Java	29.5	28.5	28.0	27.3	26.3	25.9	24.5	27.1
15	West Papua	22.2	33.0	24.5	27.1	29.0	24.5	28.1	26.9
16	Bengkulu	29.6	22.1	25.7	25.3	25.4	31.7	24.9	26.4
17	North Maluku	25.1	27.4	24.5	30.0	30.7	27.1	19.8	26.4
18	South Sumatra	28.3	25.5	25.6	21.6	27.6	28.6	26.6	26.3
19	West Nusa Tenggara	27.5	26.2	25.6	22.8	25.0	28.3	23.2	25.5

20	South Sulawesi	25.0	25.3	23.4	22.9	25.0	23.3	31.5	25.5
21	Banten	29.4	26.9	26.8	24.1	23.3	22.3	16.0	24.1
22	Maluku	23.6	28.0	23.7	16.4	21.1	17.3	24.6	22.1
23	Central Java	23.0	22.4	20.1	20.4	19.8	20.6	18.7	20.7
24	Riau	22.4	25.3	19.0	18.5	19.0	19.4	19.7	20.5
25	East Nusa Tenggara	19.8	20.1	18.6	21.0	22.5	19.2	19.2	20.1
26	Lampung	22.6	18.3	17.1	15.8	19.3	17.9	18.3	18.5
27	Aceh	19.5	16.9	15.2	18.1	17.5	25.4	12.4	17.9
28	West Sumatra	19.0	16.8	18.0	20.6	13.2	14.3	15.0	16.7
29	Bali	15.9	15.4	15.6	14.5	16.5	16.7	16.4	15.9
30	North Sumatra	14.0	14.1	16.5	16.8	14.8	14.6	15.4	15.2
31	Riau Islands	36.9	8.4	13.1	13.1	6.8	9.2	11.7	14.2
32	DKI Jakarta	12.8	12.0	12.2	13.4	14.9	15.9	14.7	13.7
33	D.I Yogyakarta	13.8	14.9	11.6	10.6	10.7	17.1	14.3	13.3

Source: Secondary analysis of SUSENAS 2008-2012, 2013 and 2015

For district and sub-district level analysis, child marriage prevalence data is only available for adolescent girls (ages 15-19) in 2010. 106 districts (out of a total of 497 districts identified) have female adolescent marriage rates of 20 per cent or higher.[12] The districts with the highest prevalence of female adolescent marriage can be found in Central Java, East Java and South Kalimantan. Provincial averages can mask districts where prevalence is much higher than the national or provincial average. For example, while Central Java's provincial prevalence has been consistently low (13.5 per cent in 2012), Wonosobo has the highest district prevalence nationally (63 per cent in 2010).[13] In East Java, the provincial prevalence is 16.7 per cent in 2012, while the prevalence in its districts range from 5 to 35 per cent and its sub-districts range from 2 to 64 per cent in 2010. The districts in East Java with the highest prevalence (Bondowoso at 35 per cent, Probolinggo at 35 per cent, Situbondo at 34 per cent, and Sumenep at 32 per cent) have sub-districts with even higher prevalence rates, such as Sumbermalang in Probolinggo with 64 per cent.

Of the 6,651 sub-districts in Indonesia in 2010, 1,085 sub-districts have a prevalence above 25 percent. Analysis of sub-districts shows that although most provinces include sub-districts with female adolescent marriage prevalence higher than 25 per cent, East Java, Central Java and South Kalimantan have the greatest number of high prevalence sub-districts (this does not take into account the number of sub-districts within each province). Analysis of sub-districts shows that although most provinces include sub-districts with female adolescent marriage prevalence higher than 25 per cent, East Java, Central Java and South Kalimantan have the greatest number of high prevalence sub-districts.

The *Child Marriage in Indonesia (2013 and 2015)* report presents additional findings based on the SUSENAS data for 2013 and 2015.

6. **Access to skilled health workers during childbirth and early infant interventions are better for girls marrying after the age of 18:**
The analysis identifies girls marrying before the age of 18 are less likely to be assisted by a skilled health professional during child birth compared to women who marry after the age of 18 (84.5 per cent and 92.2 per cent respectively). Similarly, girls who marry before the age of 18 are slightly less likely to provide breast milk to infants within one hour after birth, referred to as "early initiation of breastfeeding", compared to girls marrying after the age of 18 (38.6 per cent and 42.7 per cent respectively). Girls who marry before 18 may be less knowledgeable regarding child development and nutrition, and may indicate that they are less prepared to become parents.

7. **Girls who marry before the age of 18 are not likely to access social protection benefits directed at poor households:**
The analysis suggests that girls marry before the age of 18 are not likely to be identified as poor through a national database (based on their socio-economic status) to qualify for a Kartu Perlindungan Sosial (KPS) and consequently be able to purchase subsidized rice (Raskin). Only 18.2 per cent of girls married below the age of 18 have a KPS. This indicates households with girls who marry before the age of 18 tend to be invisible even though they are likely to live in households with low levels of expenditure.

8. **Girls who marry before the age of 18 are more likely to participate in the agricultural sector and be a part of the informal economy:**
The analysis suggests that girls aged 20 to 24 who marry before the age of 18 tend to work in the informal sector (68.6 per cent) compared to the formal sector (31.4 per cent) in 2015. Whereas, there is no significant difference in the distribution for formal and informal employment for women married after the age of 18 (49.4 and 50.6 per cent respectively). Furthermore, in 2015, girls who marry before the age of 18, are most likely to work in agriculture, followed by industry and services (41.5 per cent, 22.2 per cent, and 36.3 per cent respectively). Women who marry above the age of 18 are found to be working in services, followed by agriculture and industries (52.0 per cent, 22.6 per cent, and 25.5 per cent respectively). A reason for this may be the qualifications required for employment in the services industry, which girls who marry before the age of 18 may not be eligible for due to their lower educational attainment.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

As progress on reducing child marriage prevalence has stagnated - there is much to be done to accelerate the decline in child marriage prevalence. The report offers five recommendations to help end child marriage in Indonesia:

1. **Increase coverage of education services and additional support to older girls aged 16 to 17:**
The large numbers of girls marrying at 16 and 17 in Indonesia points to the need to increase access to services and coverage for older girls. Education provides a strong protection tool against child marriage, and global and Indonesian evidence shows that completing secondary school is one of the best ways to delay marriage.[14] Indonesia's new efforts to provide social assistance to help poor children access education (Bantuan Siswa Miskin) are critical for individual girls and their families in preventing or postponing child marriage. Additional interventions should include the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education in schools; ensuring married and pregnant girls and girls with children continue their education; and ensuring school is accessible and affordable.

2. **Address social and cultural norms at the local level:**
The report identifies child marriage to be widespread and practiced across all economic levels, in rural and urban communities, and throughout all parts of the country. While Indonesia's social and cultural diversity make it challenging to target cultural norms broadly, targeted efforts can respond appropriately at the local level. Specific strategies include engaging local leaders, religious leaders and other influential community members; encouraging parents to make better investments in their daughters; working with men and boys to promote gender equality; empowering girls by creating social support networks and supporting them with information and assets; and supporting community mobilization efforts.

3. **Address the role poverty plays by creating more opportunities for girls to access higher education and economic skills' training:**
Poverty plays an important role in perpetuating child marriage and is one of its main drivers. Globally, parents may choose to marry off their daughters to ensure their future, or alternatively girls may be seen as an economic burden.[15] As girls are denied the opportunity to education and economic empowerment, girls and their future families are trapped in a cycle of poverty. Opportunities need to be created for girls to develop new skills and generate income, to build an economic base and lift themselves and future generations out of poverty. Economic empowerment opportunities targeted at girls are critical to ending child marriage, which

promotes their education and provides them with important skills such as financial literacy, leadership training, and vocational and livelihoods skills training. These efforts are vital to shift how females are valued and perceived in society and how they value themselves. Individual social protection efforts are more effective if complemented by national social protection efforts that aim to reduce household and child poverty, for example through universal child grants and social assistance schemes. Indonesia is rolling out social protection measures that can be strengthened to more effectively target vulnerable children, families and adolescent girls at risk.

4. **Target efforts to the provinces, districts and sub-districts with the highest prevalence rates and highest absolute numbers of female adolescent marriage:**
   The report highlights the need to target child marriage at all levels (provincial, district and sub-district) and by location, as rates vary widely between provinces, districts and sub-districts and within. Efforts to address child marriage should therefore be targeted at the districts and sub-districts identified with the highest prevalence. A two-pronged approach should be applied, which first broadly addresses the widespread prevalence at the provincial and district levels, and secondly addresses the locally concentrated issue at the sub-district level.

5. **Support further research on the issue of child marriage in Indonesia:**
   Research on the issue of child marriage is fairly new to Indonesia and much remains to be learned. Investment in further data-driven research is needed to improve program and policy responses. This includes a better understanding of how decisions are made within families about girls' marriage and education, which factors enable some parents to invest heavily in their daughters compared to others, and what girls' expectations and aspirations are for their marriages and futures.

LOOKING FORWARD

Indonesia is poised to seriously tackle the issue of child marriage. The reports, *Progress on Pause: An Analysis of Child Marriage Data in Indonesia* and *Child Marriage in Indonesia (2013 and 2015)*, urge a strong, multi-stakeholder commitment to tackle child marriage through effective legislation and programming. It emphasizes that girls be included at all stages of a response, as their participation is vital to their own empowerment and to developing effective interventions. Child marriage drains girls, their families, and the country of their potential. Indonesia is ready for a better investment in its future by improving the lives of its girls and women.

1   The analysis does not include 2014 due to unavailable data and was subsequently omitted.
2   The Indonesian Demographic and Health Survey (IDHS) also provides data on child marriage prevalence in Indonesia. The survey is conducted every 5 years and was last administered in 2012. The DHS provides internationally comparable data on demographic and health characteristics of populations in developing countries. According to IDHS 2012, 17% of all women aged 20-24 are married before age 18. This statistic is calculated using a denominator of the female population rather than ever-married women.
3   United Nations Population Fund, Marrying Too Young: End child marriage, UNFPA, New York, 2012, p. 44.
4   Evenhuis, Mark and Jennifer Burn, Just Married, Just a Child: Child marriage in the Indo-Pacific region, Plan International Australia, Melbourne, 2014, p. 10.
5   United Nations Children's Fund, The State of the World's Children 2016, New York, 2016.
6   United Nations Children's Fund, Cost of Inaction: Child and Adolescent Marriage in Indonesia, 2015.
7   Evenhuis, Mark and Jennifer Burn, Just Married, Just a Child: Child marriage in the Indo-Pacific region, Plan International Australia, Melbourne, 2014, p. 26.
8   Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia and 18+ Coalition, Menyingkap Tabi Dispensasi Perkawinan, Koalisi 18+, Jakarta, 2016.
9   United Nations Children's Fund, Legal Protection from Violence: Analysis of domestic laws related to violence against children in ASEAN member States, UNICEF EAPRO, Bangkok, 2015.
10 SUSENAS is conducted annually and covers a nationally representative sample of Indonesian households typically composed of 200,000 households.
11 Average prevalence is calculated based on rounded figures and final figures may vary with their decimal points.
12 20 per cent was selected as a cut off as it represents a rate of 1.5 times the unweighted national average of 13 per cent. Data for this section was analyzed using the cohort 15-19 instead of 20-24.
13 The district-level disaggregation is only available from the population census 2010, while the SUSENAS adolescent disaggregated data in only available for 2012.
14 Malhotra, A., Warner, A., McGonagle, A., & Lee-Rife, S. Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Says, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2011.
15 United Nations Population Fund, Marrying Too Young: End child marriage, UNFPA, New York, 2012, p. 12.

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