

AGE  
10-15



child

marriage



## What is child marriage?

Child marriage is when a girl or boy gets married when they are under the age of 18. Usually, the marriage takes place between a girl and an older man, but it can also be between a girl and a boy.

## Why does it happen?

There are many reasons why some older men want to marry girls. Usually it's about culture and old-fashioned ideas about women and men.

Sometimes girls get married because they're pregnant, or because families want them to be married before they get pregnant.

Parents may also put pressure on young people to marry because of custom or because they are poor.

## What's wrong with child marriage?

Child marriage harms a girl's health, education, safety and happiness. When girls are married at a young age, it often means that:

- ▲ Girls stop going to school. This means they have fewer options to earn a living.
- ▲ Girls get pregnant at a young age, before their bodies are ready. This increases the risk of illness and even death.

- ▲ Girls are at greater risk of getting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- ▲ Girls are at risk of violence – emotional and physical violence.
- ▲ Girls are often cut off from their families and friends who are still at school.

Girls who get married young aren't free to make their own choices. They have many responsibilities at a young age: being a mother, doing housework and looking after their husbands, with no time or freedom to take care of themselves or their future.

Delaying child marriage until a girl is ready means that she can make her own decisions in life.

## HOW CAN WE STOP CHILD MARRIAGE?

There's no simple way to end child marriage. Adults and young people must all work together.

You and your friends can make a difference by helping adults change the way your community thinks about child marriage. There are lots of ways you can do this, including:

- ✓ **Speaking** out in your community against child marriage. If girls stay at school, they're more likely to marry later, be healthy and safe, and earn money. That's

good for girls, their families and their communities – everybody!

- ✓ **Understanding** that girls have the right to make their own choices in life. This means that – like men and boys – girls can choose if they marry, who and when. They have the right to decide how many children they have and when. And girls have the right to safer sex: to use a condom to protect themselves against STIs, including HIV.
- ✓ **Telling** your teachers, parents and community leaders if you see a young girl being forced into marriage.

Adults who want to end child marriage have changed laws to make it illegal in many places. They also work with young people to make sure that the voices of girls and boys are heard when major decisions are made, like changing laws and policies. You can read about these efforts here:



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