

GIVING

what we can

CHILD MARRIAGE

CAUSES, EFFECTS AND INTERVENTIONS



Photograph by [Stephanie Sinclair](#).¹

“There is a saying that goes: ‘The youth is the hope of the nation.’ How can we build a good and progressive nation if our children are forced to stop schooling [...] How can we build a bright tomorrow if we are not given a bright today?”

—Analou, age 16, Philippines.²

¹ “This shot shows two child brides in rural Yemen with their husbands. Tahani, the girl in pink, is eight; her husband Majed is 27. Ghada, in green, is also eight, while her husband Saltan is 33.” - [The Guardian](#).

² Plan. 2007. [Because I Am a Girl: State of the World’s Girls](#). 91.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 - INTRODUCTION	4
2 - CAUSES	5
2.1 - Economics	5
2.2 - Culture	6
3. EFFECTS	7
3.1 - Education	8
3.2 - HIV	9
3.3 - Child death	10
3.4 - Fertility	12
3.5 - Death by childbirth	13
3.6 - Child welfare	14
3.7 - Productivity	15
3.8 - Slavery	16
3.9 - Domestic violence and rape	16
3.10 - Political activism	17
4 - INTERVENTIONS	19
5 - CASE STUDIES	21
5.1 - Berhane Hewan	21
5.2 - The Zomba Cash Transfer	23
5.3 - Apni Beti Apna Dhan (ABAD)	23
5.4 The Punjab Female School Stipend Program	25
6 - LIMITATIONS	26
7 - CHARITIES	28
8 - CONCLUSION	29
BIBLIOGRAPHY	30

SUMMARY

An estimated ten to fourteen million girls - females aged under eighteen - are newly married each year. Child marriage is a leading impediment to achieving six out of eight Millennium Development Goals. The problem of child marriage is growing.

The causes are economic and cultural. Girls from poor families are nearly twice as likely to marry before they are women than girls from wealthy families. It means one less mouth to feed and the bride is often sold for a fee. But it is also a deep-rooted tradition. Parents report acting out of duty.

Child marriage is a form of slavery that is central to the cycle of poverty. It may increase HIV transmission rates. Married girls receive less education. This raises rates of fertility, child death and death by childbirth. It makes the children that survive worse off. It hinders the woman's lifetime economic productivity and political activity. It certainly heightens rates of domestic violence and rape.

Effective interventions exist. Programs that empower girls with information, skills and support networks to enable self-advocacy are promising. Berhane Hewan did this, and participants were nearly three times more likely to be in school than non-programme participants, and were 90 percent less likely to be married. Also promising are programs that provide economic support and incentives to girls and their families to keep them in education rather than marrying early. The Zomba Cash Transfer did this, and participants were 40 percent less likely to marry after one year than girls in the control group. This intervention is simple and scalable.

Most work on child marriage is conducted by states and foundations. Opportunities for private philanthropy are scarce. No identified charities practice cash interventions. Levels of transparency, self-criticism and how funding is used are all unclear.

As a cause, it is worth taking child marriage very seriously.

1 INTRODUCTION

An estimated ten³ to fourteen⁴ million girls - females aged under eighteen - are newly married each year. This affects one in three girls in the developing world.⁵ Over half of all girls in countries like Ethiopia⁶ and Bangladesh⁷ are married.

An estimated fourteen million girls also become pregnant each year.⁸ Ninety percent are married.⁹ Seven percent die by pregnancy.¹⁰ Pregnancy is the main cause of death for girls over fifteen.¹¹ Girls aged ten to fourteen are five times more likely to die by pregnancy than pregnant women aged twenty to twenty four.¹²

The children of mothers who are girls have over a fifty percent higher chance of dying within a month of birth than the children of mothers who are women.¹³

The problem of child marriage is growing. According to estimates by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), by 2021 there will be over fifteen million newly married girls each year.¹⁴

Child marriage is a leading impediment to achieving six out of eight [Millennium Development Goals](#).¹⁵

³ Santhya, K. G. and Annabel Erulkar. 2007. '[Supporting Married Girls: Calling Attention to a Neglected Group](#)', Population Council. 1.

⁴ Girls Not Brides: [What is the impact?](#)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ YouTube: [The girl effect: Kidan from Ethiopia dreams of becoming a doctor.](#)

⁷ YouTube: [The girl effect: Sanchita from Bangladesh on microloans.](#)

⁸ [The Nike Foundation.](#)

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Patton, G.C., et al. "[Global Patterns of Mortality in Young People.](#)" The Lancet 374.9693 (2009): 881-892.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2012. "[Marrying too young: end child marriage.](#)" 6.

¹² UNFPA, 2005: [Child Marriage Fact Sheet.](#)

¹³ World Health Organisation (WHO), 2008: [Why is giving special attention to adolescents important for achieving Millennium Development Goal 5?](#)

¹⁴ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2012. "[Marrying too young: end child marriage.](#)" 6.

¹⁵ Girls Not Brides: [What is the impact?](#)

2 CAUSES

Child marriage is clearly complex, but we can understand the two main causes in terms of economics and culture:

In low-income families, the lack of economic alternatives contributes to the practice, as marriage to an older man may be seen as bringing economic security – for the girl and sometimes for her entire family. Furthermore, disasters and emergencies may increase economic pressure on households, making child marriage a common practice where it was not previously acceptable. In many contexts it is considered normal for young adolescent girls to marry older men and is justified as a tradition or customary practice essential to preserving a family's 'honor' and a girl's virginity. In a broader sense, the acceptance of marrying a girl as a child is part of a cluster of social norms and attitudes that do not value the human rights of girls. In this sense, child marriage is symptomatic of social and cultural traditions, attitudes, and beliefs that deny women and girls their rights and stifle their ability to play an equal role in their homes and communities.¹⁶

2.1 Economics

Girls Not Brides summarises the economic explanation:

Where poverty is acute, giving a daughter in marriage allows parents to reduce family expenses by ensuring they have one less person to feed, clothe and educate. In communities where a dowry or 'bride price' is paid, it is often welcome income for poor families [...].¹⁷

Research supports the economic explanation by showing that poor families are less likely to educate girls,¹⁸ and if girls are not in education they are more likely to become married.¹⁹

Girls from poor families are nearly twice as likely to marry before they are women than girls from wealthy families.²⁰

¹⁶ Lauro, Giovanna; Margaret E. Greene. 2013. "[Child Marriage: A 'Universal' Issue.](#)"

¹⁷ Girls Not Brides: [Why Does It Happen?](#)

¹⁸ Plan, 2013. "[Child Marriage in Bangladesh.](#)" 24.

¹⁹ Ibid, 8.

²⁰ International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2008. '[Knot Ready: Lessons from India on Delaying Marriage for Girls.](#)' 9.

Also see Mathur, S., M. Greene, and A. Malhotra. 2003. "[Too young to wed: the lives, rights, and health of young married girls.](#)" ICRW. 6.

2.2 Culture

But economic explanations don't suffice:

Poverty is one reason so many Yemeni families marry their children off early. Another is the fear of girls being carried off and married by force. But most important are cultural tradition and the belief that a young virginal bride can best be shaped into a dutiful wife, according to comprehensive study of early marriage published by Sana University in 2006.²¹

Religion also plays a role:

Hard-line Islamic conservatives, whose influence has grown enormously in the past two decades, defend it, pointing to the Prophet Muhammad's marriage to a 9-year-old. Child marriage is deeply rooted in local custom here, and even enshrined in an old tribal expression: "Give me a girl of 8, and I can give you a guarantee" for a good marriage.²²

A Plan report from Bangladesh found that parents feel obliged to find husbands for their girls.²³ It also found that this was in spite of the fact that parents know of child marriage's bad effects.²⁴ It concludes that traditional norms and community pressure are the primary causes of child marriage.²⁵

²¹ Worth, Robert F. 2008. "[Tiny Voices Defy Child Marriage in Yemen](#)." The New York Times.

²² Ibid.

²³ Plan, 2013. "[Child Marriage in Bangladesh](#)." 8.

²⁴ Ibid, 14.

²⁵ Ibid, 24.

3 EFFECTS

The effects of child marriage are vast and colossal. [The Nike Foundation](#) implies and summarises the bad effects by outlining the benefits of girls avoiding marriage:

When a girl in poverty completes secondary school, marries and has her first child later, she helps to create economic growth, political and social stability [...]²⁶

When a girl in the developing world is enabled to realize her full potential, she isn't the only one who escapes poverty. She brings her family, community and country with her.

We call this: the girl effect.²⁷

Robert Worth reports that child marriage is a 'crucial part of the cycle of poverty':

Pulled out of school and forced to have children before their bodies are ready, many rural Yemeni women end up illiterate and with serious health problems. Their babies are often stunted, too.²⁸

[Mabel Van Oranje](#) of Girls Not Brides insists that child marriage is the key to addressing education, maternal death, infant mortality, the spread of HIV, gender inequality and poverty.²⁹

Giovanna Lauro of [Promundo](#) and Margaret E. Greene of [GreeneWorks](#) support this picture:

Child brides are twice as likely to be victims of domestic violence than their peers who marry later. Girls are also twice as likely to contract sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV than boys of the same age. Girls also face significantly higher risks of dying during pregnancy and childbirth than women in their 20s – complications from pregnancy and childbirth being the leading cause of death for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 in poorer countries. Stillbirths and deaths of newborn babies are 50% higher among mothers under the age of 20 than among women who get pregnant in their 20s. Finally, child marriage often prevents girls from continuing their schooling, and inhibits them from breaking out of poverty.³⁰

²⁶ Nike Inc.: [Our Work](#).

²⁷ [The Nike Foundation](#),

²⁸ Worth, Robert F. 2008. "[Tiny Voices Defy Child Marriage in Yemen](#)." The New York Times.

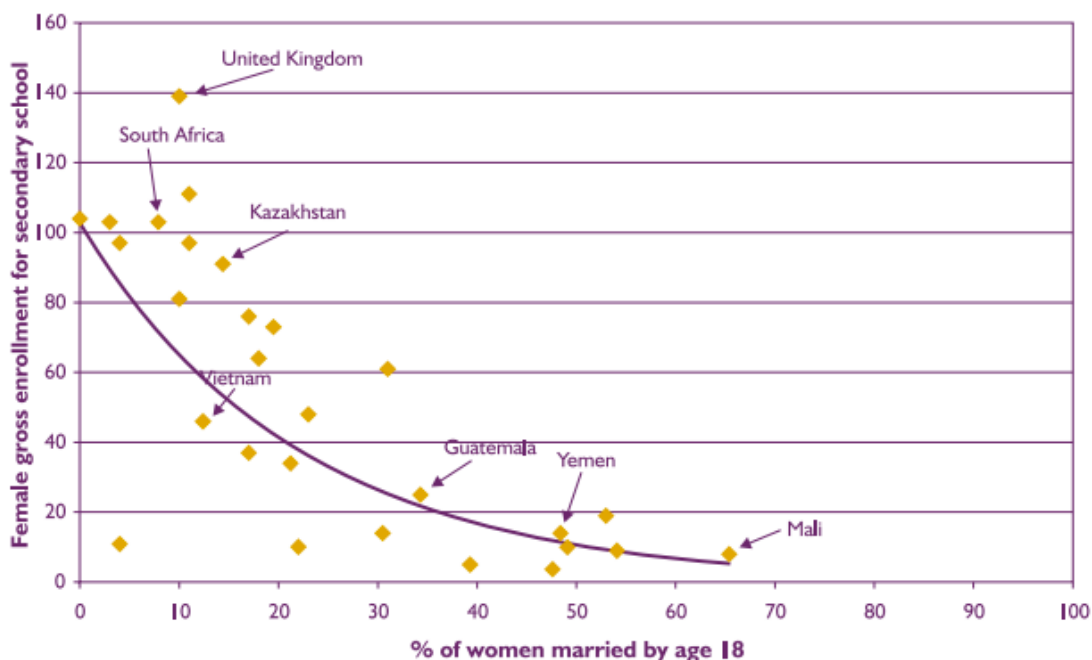
²⁹ YouTube: [The girl effect: The ripple effect of ending child marriage](#).

Also see Girls Not Brides: [Infographic](#) and Girls Not Brides, 2013. "[Ending child marriage: What will it take?](#)"³.

³⁰ Lauro, Giovanna; Margaret E. Greene. 2013. "[Child Marriage: A 'Universal' Issue](#)."

It is worth outlining the various effects in greater detail.³¹

Figure 5
Proportion of women married by age 18 and gross enrollment in secondary school



Sources: Population Reference Bureau 2000; DHS data since 1990; Alan Guttmacher Institute 1998

3.1 Education

Figure by Mathur, S., M. Greene, and A. Malhotra. 2003. [“Too young to wed: the lives, rights, and health of young married girls.”](#) ICRW.

Bjørn Lomborg of the Copenhagen Consensus and Elizabeth M. King of the World Bank report that:

For adolescent girls, early marriage or an unwanted pregnancy typically curtails schooling. Delaying marriage and childbearing allows them to gain more education and perhaps more earning opportunities, as well as improved health, education, and labor market success for their future children [...].³²

A study of 29 countries adds:

[A] woman's age at first marriage is positively related to her total years of schooling; in all 29 countries, women who married when they were 18 or older had more education than those who married at a younger age. The starkest difference was in Nigeria, where women who were at least 18

³¹ For a further overview of the effects, see Summers, L.H., 1994: [Investing in all the people, educating women in developing countries](#), EDI Seminar Paper No. 45, Economic Development Institute of The World Bank: Washington, DC.

³² Lomborg, B and King, E. M. 2008. [“Women and Development.”](#) Project Syndicate.

when they married achieved, on average, 9.3 years of schooling, while those who married before they were 18 remained in school for only 2.5 years. Differences in educational attainment by age at first marriage were evident both in countries with low levels of overall education, such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Mali, and in countries with higher levels of education, such as South Africa, Peru and Zimbabwe.³³

The value of education is instrumental and of huge significance. Various benefits will be identified or implied in the next sections.

3.2 HIV

An examination of the effects of child marriage on the risk of acquiring HIV showed:

[M]arried adolescent girls in urban centers in Kenya and Zambia have higher rates of HIV infection than do sexually active unmarried girls. In both countries, we find that early marriage increases coital frequency, decreases condom use, and virtually eliminates girls' ability to abstain from sex. Moreover, husbands of married girls are about three times more likely to be HIV-positive than are boyfriends of single girls. Although married girls are less likely than single girls to have multiple partners, this protective behavior may be outweighed by their greater exposure via unprotected sex with partners who have higher rates of infection. These results challenge commonly held assumptions about sex within marriage.³⁴

A further study suggested:

Several behavioral and social factors may increase the vulnerability of married female adolescents to HIV infection. First, these young women engage in frequent unprotected sex: In most countries, more than 80% of adolescents who had had unprotected sex during the previous week were married. Second, women who marry young tend to have much older husbands (mean age difference, 5–14 years) and, in polygamous societies, are frequently junior wives, factors that may increase the probability that their husbands are infected and weaken their bargaining power within the marriage. Third, married adolescents have relatively little access to educational and media sources of information about HIV. Finally, the most common AIDS prevention strategies (abstinence, condom use) are not realistic options for many married adolescents.³⁵

³³ Clark, S, J Bruce and A Dude. 2006. '[Protecting Young Women from HIV/AIDS: The Case Against Child and Adolescent Marriage](#),' International Family Planning Perspectives 32(2): 79-88.

³⁴ Clark, S. 2004. "[Early Marriage and HIV Risks in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)," *Studies in Family Planning*, 35(3), 149–160.

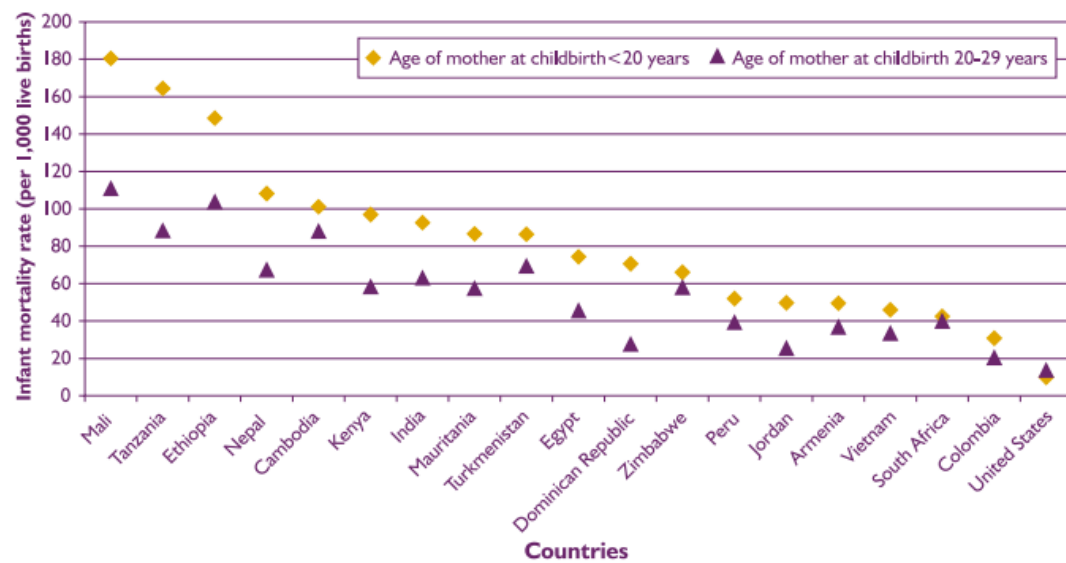
³⁵ Clark, S, J Bruce and A Dude. 2006. '[Protecting Young Women from HIV/AIDS: The Case Against Child and Adolescent Marriage](#),' International Family Planning Perspectives 32(2): 79-88.

A UNFPA report similarly claims that married girls are “likely to find it difficult to insist on condom use by their husbands, who commonly are older and more sexually experienced, making the girls especially vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections”.³⁶

However, note that a more recent study across ninety seven countries throws doubt on this:

Regression analyses adjusted for development and world region demonstrate that nations with higher rates of girl child marriage are significantly more likely to contend with higher rates of maternal and infant mortality and non-utilization of maternal health services, but not HIV.³⁷

Figure 6
Infant mortality rates by age of mother



Source: DHS data since 1990; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2002

3.3 Child death

Figure by Mathur, S., M. Greene, and A. Malhotra. 2003. “[Too young to wed: the lives, rights, and health of young married girls.](#)” ICRW.

[Previous research](#) by Giving What We Can noted that education may empower girls in a way that reduces child mortality, because “educated mothers are better able to take care of children when they are sick, preventing early deaths”.³⁸ Since child marriage prevents education, it also prevents this reduction.

³⁶ United Nations Population Fund, and United Nations Children’s Fund, 2010, ‘[Women’s & Children’s Rights: Making the connection.](#)’ 39.

³⁷ Raj, A. & Boehmer, U. 2013. ‘[Girl Child Marriage and Its Association with National Rates of HIV, Maternal Health, and Infant Mortality Across 97 Countries.](#)’ Violence Against Women, vol 19: 536-551.

³⁸ Gayle, Helene D. 2014. “[This is the moment to end child marriage.](#)” The Girl Effect.

Various studies support this. One that focused on Punjab in India found a clear case for the role of female education in determining child mortality rates:

Despite the existence of conditions that promote child survival (i.e., a strong network of public and private health services, good nutritional levels, a high rate of female literacy, and relatively high incomes), infant and child mortality levels in the state of Punjab remain unexpectedly high. To learn more about the behavioral determinants of child mortality, a 1-year prospective study was launched in 1984 of 1520 births that occurred in 11 villages in Punjab's Ludhiana District. [...] Of significance was the finding of a clustering of child deaths: 12.6% of the families experiences 62.2% of all child deaths. The death clustering variable retained its significance even after controlling for biological factors such as low birthweight and lactational failure, household socioeconomic status, and the child's sex. It is suggested that this phenomenon reflects the basic abilities and personality characteristics of the mother or other primary caregiver. The children of parents lacking in basic competence are more likely to become weakened as a result of poor nutrition and care, and these parents are not skilled at recognizing the signs of serious illness and seeking timely medical intervention. The factors significantly associated with child survival in this study--women's autonomy, social class, and mother's education--enable women to obtain the knowledge and confidence required for competent child care and to make use of available resources. In India, far more effort is put into educating the general population about contraception than child care. It is suggested that services should be targeted at families among whom child deaths tend to cluster.³⁹

A further study finds a similar explanation for Malaysia's progress:

This analysis has identified several factors contributing to the dramatic decline in infant mortality since World War II in Malaysia, as well as one factor that prevented the infant mortality rate from declining even more rapidly. Our main findings are the following: On average, mothers' education more than doubled over the study period, contributing to the decline in their infants' mortality. In addition, the beneficial effect of mothers' education on infant survival appears to have become stronger over the study period. Hence, further advances in education should lead to further improvements in infants' survival prospects.⁴⁰

A cross-national comparison of child mortality rates also concludes:

In 9 countries the highest rates occurred among mothers with no education and in a further 6 among husbands with no education. Education of mother, followed by education of her husband and his occupation were generally the strongest explanatory variables.⁴¹

³⁹ Das Gupta, M. 1990. [Death clustering, mother's education and the determinants of child mortality in rural Punjab, India](#). Population Studies 44,3:489-505.

⁴⁰ DaVanzo, J. and J.-P. Habicht. 1986. [Infant mortality decline in Malaysia, 1946-1975. The roles of changes in variables and changes in the structure of relationships](#). Demography 23:143-160.

⁴¹ Hobcraft, J.N., J.W. McDonald and S.O. Rutstein. 1984. [Socioeconomic factors in infant and child mortality: a cross-national comparison](#). Population Studies 38,2:193-223.

A further study concludes that “maternal education in Nigeria appears to be the single most powerful determinant of the level of child mortality”.⁴²

3.4 Fertility

When girls are educated, they have fewer children. So by preventing education, child marriage raises birth rates. A Girls Count summary reports:

One major analysis found that in countries where few girls received secondary schooling, family size averaged more than five children, of whom one to two died in infancy. But in countries where half the girls received secondary schooling, women averaged just over three children and child deaths were rare.⁴³

In addition to bolstering the claims of the previous section, a major cross-national study shows:

[F]amily planning and health programs do influence fertility and mortality, but that the impact of expanding female secondary enrollments appears to be much greater, especially in countries with low female secondary enrollment. [...] Doubling female secondary school enrollment (from 19 to 38 percent) in 1975 would have reduced the total fertility rate in 1985 from 5.3 to 3.9. Doubling female secondary school enrollment in 1975 from 19 to 38 would have reduced the infant mortality rate from 81 to 38. [...] Female education affects desired family size by raising the opportunity cost of a woman's time in economic activities, increasing demand for family planning, and promoting more effective contraceptive use.⁴⁴

A further major study finds that “more-educated women also marry and enter motherhood later and have fewer children”.⁴⁵

⁴² Caldwell, J.C. 1979. [Education as a factor in mortality decline: an examination of Nigerian data](#). Population Studies 33,3:395-413.

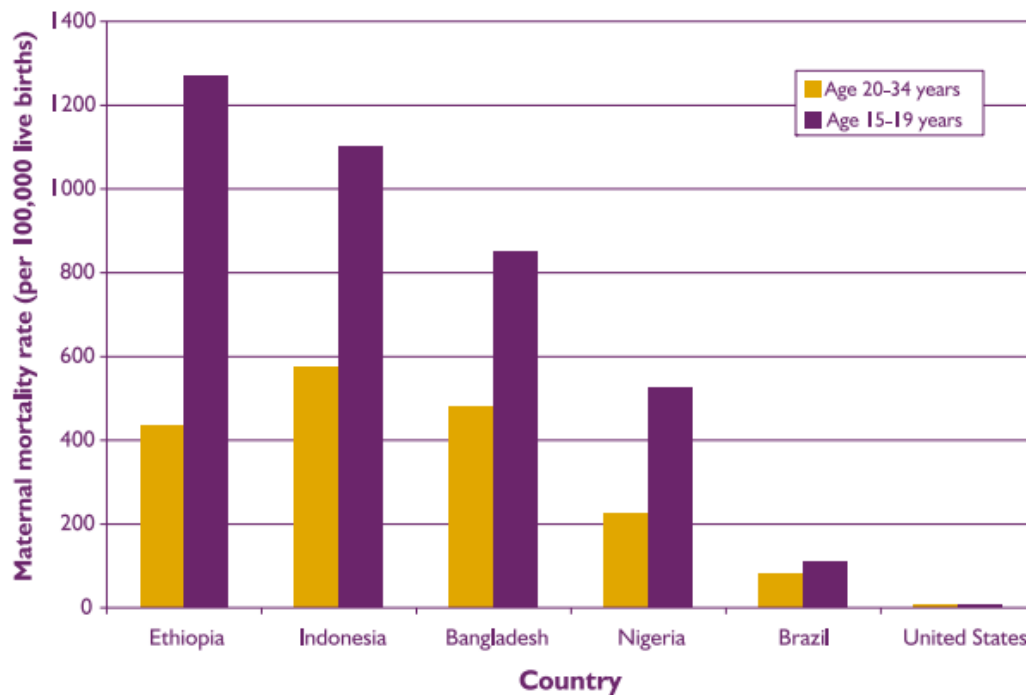
⁴³ Levine, Ruth *et al.* 2009. [Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda](#). 21.

⁴⁴ Subbarao, K., and Laura Rainey. 1995. “[Social Gains from Female Education](#).” Economic Development and Cultural Change 44 (1): 105–28.

⁴⁵ Hobcraft, J. 1993. [Women's education, child welfare and child survival: a review of the evidence](#). Health Transition Review, 171.

3.5 Death by childbirth

Figure 4
Maternal mortality by age



Source: Family Care International 1998; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2002

Figure by Mathur, S., M. Greene, and A. Malhotra. 2003. [“Too young to wed: the lives, rights, and health of young married girls.”](#) ICRW.

Previous Giving What We Can research [notes](#) a third interconnected effect:

A lower infant mortality rate reduces the fertility rate, and so reduces the chance of a woman dying during childbirth. It has also been estimated that education can reduce the chance of a mother's death from about five percent to about 1.4 percent.

A recent study concludes:

As a consequence of their greater likelihood of using health services, of avoiding high-risk pregnancies and of experiencing fewer pregnancies, [more-educated women] are considerably less likely to die in childbirth and thereby orphan their children with deleterious consequences.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ibid.

3.6 Child welfare

Educated girls who avoid marriage don't only die less from pregnancy and have fewer children that survive more. They also seem to have children that live better lives, since "those who marry later and with more authority are likely to invest in their children (especially their girl children) in ways that establish a virtuous cycle of improved health and education".⁴⁷ A Copenhagen Consensus paper notes that educated women have healthier children with reduced undernutrition since educated women have "more health knowledge, more income, and more bargaining power", and they promote the education of the next generation.⁴⁸

One study notes some promising evidence:

[T]here is fairly clear evidence of differentiation according to the level of the mother's education in the prevalence, but more especially in the treatment of childhood diseases. Educated mothers seem somewhat more successful at reducing the prevalence of diarrhoeal diseases, but their children seem equally at risk of fevers and coughs. Educated mothers are strikingly better informed about ORS packets and generally more likely to make use of these for diarrhoeal episodes. Educated mothers are also generally more likely to use medical facilities for treatment of diarrhoeal episodes, fevers, and coughs. We are not in a position to assess how far these differentials translate into better chances of survival for the children, since this information is only obtained for surviving children. Equally we can at the moment only speculate as to how far these differences, especially in treatment, translate into the improved nutritional status of children of educated women. Similarly, more educated women are more likely to have initiated immunization and even more likely to have ensured that their children are fully vaccinated. Again it is impossible to assess from DHS data how far these differences translate into a mortality advantage, since this information is only collected for surviving children, although DHS II extends coverage.⁴⁹

A comparative study of survey data from seventeen countries finds stronger evidence of women's education affecting child health.⁵⁰ A World Bank paper also finds that "the education level of adults in the household has a significant impact on the enrollment of children in all the countries studied, even after controlling for wealth. The effect of the education level of adult females is larger than that of the education level of adult males in some, but not all, of the countries studied".^{51 52}

⁴⁷ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2012. "[Marrying too young: end child marriage](#)." 51.

Also see YouTube: [The Girl Effect: Addis from Ethiopia on child marriage](#).

⁴⁸ Copenhagen Consensus, 2008. "[The Challenge of Women and Development](#)." 14.

⁴⁹ Hobcraft, J. 1993. [Women's education, child welfare and child survival: a review of the evidence](#). *Health Transition Review*, 171.

⁵⁰ Bicego, George T., and J. Ties Boerma. 1993. "[Maternal Education and Child Survival: A Comparative Study of Survey Data from 17 Countries](#)." *Social Science and Medicine* 36 (9): 1207–27.

⁵¹ Filmer, Deon. 1999. "[The Structure of Social Disparities in Education: Gender and Wealth](#)." Policy Research Report on Gender and Development Working Paper Series 5. World Bank, Washington, DC.

⁵² For more see Levine, Ruth *et al.* 2009. [Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda](#). 20-21.

3.7 Productivity

The Copenhagen Consensus implies the further pernicious effect of child marriage on economic productivity:

[M]ore schooling for girls today will confer long-run benefits to those girls in terms of their health and employment, as well as to their children's well-being in the future. At the same time, perhaps for this and other reasons, studies have found a positive association between female education and measures of aggregate economic growth.⁵³

Helen Gayle - CEO of [Care](#) - reports:

[A]ccording to the World Bank, every extra year of primary school education raises a girl's eventual wages by 10-20 per cent. And for every extra year of secondary school, income increases 15-25 per cent.⁵⁴

And the Nike Foundation's Girl Effect project estimates:

In India, adolescent pregnancy results in nearly \$10billion in lost potential income. In Uganda, 85 per cent of girls leave school early, resulting in \$10billion in lost potential earnings. By delaying child marriage and early birth for one million girls, Bangladesh could potentially add \$69billion to the national income over these girls' lifetimes.⁵⁵

A study of fifteen countries concludes:

[I]nvesting in girls so that they would complete the next level of education would lead to lifetime earnings of today's cohort of girls that is equivalent to up to 68 percent of annual gross domestic product. When adjusting for ability bias and labor demand elasticities, this figure falls to 54 percent, or 1.5 percent per year. [...] The cost of adolescent pregnancy as a share of gross domestic could be as high as 30 percent or as low as 1 percent over a girl's lifetime, depending on the assumptions used to calculate the losses.⁵⁶

And a further study estimates the economic impact of gender inequality in education:

⁵³ Copenhagen Consensus, 2008. "[The Challenge of Women and Development](#)." 13.

⁵⁴ Gayle, Helene D. 2014. "[This is the moment to end child marriage](#)." The Girl Effect.

⁵⁵ The Girl Effect: [Why Girls?](#)

⁵⁶ Chaaban, Jad and Wendy Cunningham, 2011. '[Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: the girl effect dividend](#)', World Bank.

Using cross-country and panel regressions, this article investigates how gender inequality in education affects long-term economic growth. [...] Some 0.4–0.9 percentage points of differences in annual per capita growth rates between East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East can be accounted for by differences in gender gaps in education between these regions.⁵⁷

3.8 Slavery

It is vital to emphasise the effects of child marriage. But it is also important to remember the very nature of the relationship itself:

The United Nations General Assembly’s Human Rights Council has produced a report on servile marriage as a contemporary form of slavery. [...] Anti-Slavery International’s report highlights how child marriage can often operate as a shield behind which slavery and slavery-like practices occur with apparent impunity.” Of particular interest in their report are discussions of both the issue of consent, and the nature of the marital relationship itself.⁵⁸

It seems clear that insofar as child marriage is a form of slavery, it is a particularly acute and complicated form of suffering which carries more weight than simple physical pain. To be owned and controlled is one of the worst existences imaginable.⁵⁹

3.9 Domestic violence and rape

A further effect of child marriage is higher rates of domestic violence and rape.⁶⁰ Girl brides are twice as likely as women brides to experience domestic violence.⁶¹

A study in Ethiopia found:

⁵⁷ Klasen, S., 2002: [Low Schooling for Girls, Slower Growth for All? Cross-Country Evidence on the Effect of Gender Inequality in Education on Economic Development](#), *World Bank Economic Review* **16(3)**, 345-373

⁵⁸ Greene, Margaret. 2014. “[Ending child marriage in a generation: What research is needed?](#)” Ford Foundation. 6.

⁵⁹ For more, see United Nations Human Rights Council. 2012. [Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences](#), Gulnara Shahinian. Thematic Report on Servile Marriage. Twenty-first session, Agenda item 3. New York: UNHRC.

Turner, C. 2013. [Out of the Shadows: Child Marriage and Slavery](#). London: Anti-Slavery International

Free the Slaves. 2013. [Wives in Slavery: Forced Marriage in the Congo](#). Washington, DC: Free the Slaves.

⁶⁰ Girls Not Brides, 2013. “[Ending child marriage: What will it take?](#)” 3.

⁶¹ Lauro, Giovanna; Margaret E. Greene. 2013. “[Child Marriage: A ‘Universal’ Issue.](#)”

Compared with young women who had married at ages 18–19, those married before age 15 were less likely to have known about the marriage beforehand (odds ratio, 0.2) and more likely to have experienced forced first marital sex (3.8).⁶²

A study in Uganda found that females who married as women rather than girls were less likely to have experienced any physical violence since age fifteen and were less likely to report having ever experienced sexual spousal violence.⁶³

There is also evidence from India:

Young women who had married at age 18 or older were [less] likely than those who had married before age 18 to [...] have experienced physical violence ([odds ratio] 0.6) or sexual violence (0.7).⁶⁴

A further study in India also concludes that “women who were married as adolescents remain at increased risk of [marital violence] into young adulthood”.^{65 66}

3.10 Political activism

Another benefit of female education which child marriage obstructs is the political activity of women. Amartya Sen argues that “the changing agency of women is one of the major mediators of economic and social change [...] Nothing, arguably, is as important today in the political economy of development as adequate recognition of political, economic, and social participation and leadership of women”.⁶⁷

A Girls Count report claims:

The benefits of girls’ schooling and other improvements in welfare ripple throughout the community. Educated women are more likely to participate in civic life and to advocate for community

⁶² Erulkar, A. 2013. [Early Marriage, Marital Relations and Intimate Partner Violence in Ethiopia](#). *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 39(1) (March): 6-13.

⁶³ Green, C., A. Mukuria, and D. Rubin. 2009. [Addressing Early Marriage in Uganda](#). Washington, DC: Futures Group, Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1. v.

⁶⁴ Santhya, K., Ram, U., Acharya, R., Jejeebhoy, S., Ram, F., & Singh, A. 2010. [Associations Between Early Marriage and Young Women's Marital and Reproductive Health Outcomes: Evidence from India](#). *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 36(3), 132-139. New York, NY: Population Council.

⁶⁵ Raj, A., Saggurti, N., Lawrence, D., Balaiah, D., & Silverman, J. G. 2010. [Association between adolescent marriage and marital violence among young adult women in India](#). *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics*, 110(1), 35-39.

⁶⁶ For more, see Kishor, Sunita and Kiersten Johnson, 2004, [Profiling Domestic Violence – A Multi-Country Study](#), ORC Macro, Calverton, Maryland.

⁶⁷ Sen, Amartya. 1999. [Development as Freedom](#). New York: Knopf. 203

improvements. In India, for example, the quality of health services improved as women's education levels increased thanks to women's informed demand and the pressure they put on local services.⁶⁸

UNESCO further report that "in Bangladesh, women with a secondary education are three times more likely to attend a political meeting than are women with no education".⁶⁹

The Girls Count report notes some further effects:

Communities with educated women are able to staff their basic health facilities with nurses and their primary schools with local teachers—two vitally important professions that increasingly rely on women as men find growing employment opportunities in other sectors of the economy. By contrast, communities with few educated women find themselves with unstaffed or understaffed clinics and with nonresident and absentee teachers. Pakistan is a case in point.

In rural communities that have had a girls' secondary school for some time, girls' schools are well staffed with female teachers from the local community; in rural communities that do not have a girls' secondary school, the schools have to hire teachers from outside the community who tend to have higher rates of absenteeism.⁷⁰

Gender inequality in education also has negative effects on democratic potential:

Democracy is also negatively and significantly related to the gap between male and female primary attainment, with an estimated coefficient of -0.047 (0.013). [...] One interpretation of this relation is that the spread between male and female attainment is a proxy for general inequality of schooling and income. However, the inclusion of explicit measures of educational and income inequality (discussed below) does not eliminate the explanatory power of the gap between male and female schooling. Perhaps more promising is the idea [...] that expanded educational opportunity for females goes along with a social structure that is generally more participatory and, hence, more receptive to democracy.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Levine, Ruth *et al.* 2009. [Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda](#). 20.

The report cites Mari Bhat, P N. 1998. "Contours of Fertility Decline in India: An Analysis of District-Level Trends from Two Recent Censuses." In G. Martine, M. Das Gupta and L. C. Chen, eds. [Reproductive Change in India and Brazil](#). Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.

⁶⁹ UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization). 2000. [Women and Girls: Education, Not Discrimination](#). Paris. 2.

⁷⁰ Levine, Ruth *et al.* 2009. [Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda](#). 20.

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⁷¹ Barro, R. J. 1999. [Determinants of democracy](#). *Journal of Political economy*, 107(S6), 166-167.

4 INTERVENTIONS

Girls Not Brides and ICRW categorise possible interventions relating to child marriage into five categories⁷²:

1. Empowering girls with information, skills and support networks, enabling self-advocacy.
2. Providing economic support and incentives to girls and their families.
3. Educate and rally parents and community members about child marriage's bad effects.
4. Enhance girls' access to a high-quality education.
5. Encourage supportive laws and policies.

My impression is that it is worth focusing on categories one, two and four. These seem simpler, have received more attention and show significant promise. They are also related. Often, the economic incentive to prevent child marriage is conditional on the girl's receiving education, and self-advocacy can be enabled as part of education. We should also expect category two interventions to be promising given they explicitly address the economic cause of child marriage outlined earlier. In section five I consider some case studies, but first I will describe these interventions generally in more detail.

The ICRW explains the rationale behind category one interventions:

The main rationale behind this set of interventions is to equip young girls to better know themselves, their world and their options and to end their social and economic isolation, enabling them to act and advocate for themselves, in both the short- and long-term. A related rationale is that girls with more human and social capital will aspire to jobs and enterprises as alternatives to marriage. They will also be viewed differently by parents and community members, making it unacceptable to marry them at young ages and thus helping to change norms around child marriage. At least for the duration of the programs, these activities may also serve as socially acceptable alternatives to marriage, something often lacking in communities with high rates of child marriage.⁷³

And it does seem enabling self-advocacy can work. A report from Bangladesh confirms that “there were a few cases where the girl herself resisted the pressure from her parents and convinced them to delay her marriage. In such cases, the determination of the girl not to marry early was a critical factor in preventing her marriage”.⁷⁴ More importantly, a systematic review of twenty three programs concludes:

⁷² International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) & Girls Not Brides, 2013. [“Solutions to end child marriage: summary of the evidence.”](#) 2.

⁷³ ICRW. 2011. [Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows.](#) 11.

⁷⁴ Plan, 2013. [“Child Marriage in Bangladesh.”](#) 16.

The strongest results were documented by programs that worked directly with girls to empower them with information, skills and resources. This includes programs such as the Maharashtra Life Skills program in India (positive results) and Berhane Hewan in Ethiopia (positive results for the 10-14 age group). Both programs have strong evaluations and well-designed interventions that address key drivers of child marriage.⁷⁵

Moving on, the Copenhagen Consensus explains the rationale behind category two and four interventions:

The benefits to the next generation that accrue via the mortality, education, and fertility effects are also not usually captured by the parents making the schooling decision for the girls. As in other instances of external effects, there is therefore a clear case for a public intervention to internalize these externalities.⁷⁶

The ICRW explains why education prevents child marriage:

Normatively, simply being in school helps a girl to be seen as a child, and thus not marriageable. Other than home, schools can be seen as a “safe space” for girls. [... Moreover,] the experience and content of schooling help girls to develop social networks and acquire skills and information, all of which contribute to their ability to better communicate and negotiate their interests.⁷⁷

Margaret Greene adds:

Plan UK’s report [Breaking Vows](#) links the prevention of child marriage closely with girls’ opportunities to remain in school. Its contribution to this review of the programmatic opportunities to end child marriage is to highlight the need to improve school quality and increase girls’ school retention as the single most important intervention to invest in.⁷⁸

As mentioned, common incentives to ensure girls remain in education instead of marrying include “microfinance schemes to help girls support themselves and their families, and providing loans, subsidies and conditional cash transfers to parents of girls at risk of becoming child brides”.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ ICRW. 2011. [Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows](#). 23.

⁷⁶ Copenhagen Consensus, 2008. “[The Challenge of Women and Development](#).” 14.

⁷⁷ ICRW. 2011. [Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows](#). 14.

Also see ICRW & Girls Not Brides, 2013. “[Solutions to end child marriage: summary of the evidence](#).” 2: “[I]f girls are in school, they are less likely to be seen as ready for marriage by their families and community members”.

[Girls Not Brides](#) and [Plan](#) both claim girls educated past seventh grade are more likely to marry four years later.

⁷⁸ Greene, Margaret. 2014. “[Ending child marriage in a generation: What research is needed?](#)” Ford Foundation. 5.

⁷⁹ Girls Not Brides: [How We Can End Child Marriage](#).

On the question of economic incentives, the Copenhagen Consensus adds:

Demand-side interventions seek to increase female schooling by increasing parental demand to send their daughters to school. Given that schooling involves significant direct costs (school fees, uniforms, textbooks, supplies) that are sizable (as a share of per capita income) in many developing countries (the ILO MISA study by ILO/UNCTAD Advisory Group (2001) estimates these to be 22 percent of per-capita income in poor African countries) and sizable opportunity costs (as children in school are not available for child labor, household production, or sibling care), lowering these direct and/or opportunity costs would likely increase enrollments.⁸⁰ [...]

[C]onditional cash transfer (CCT) programs in which households receive funds that are tied to children attending school increase enrollment rates significantly [... W]e propose a CCT program that transfers resources to mothers conditional on girls of schooling age actually attending school as the most feasible and cost-effective way to increase female education.⁸¹

Margaret Greene offers further support when she writes that “round the world, cash transfers and vouchers designed to alter a variety of behaviors and outcomes are gaining credibility”.⁸²

⁸⁰ Copenhagen Consensus, 2008. “[The Challenge of Women and Development](#).” 16.

⁸¹ Ibid, 17.

As evidence they cite: Kim, J., H. Alderman, and P.F. Orazem, 1999: [Can Private School Subsidies Increase Enrollment for the Poor? The Quetta Urban Fellowship Program](#), *World Bank Economic Review* **13(3)**: 443-65

Khandker, S.R., M. M. Pitt, and N. Fuwa, 2003: [Subsidy to Promote Girls’ Secondary Education: The Female Stipend Program in Bangladesh](#), Working paper, The World Bank.

Filmer, D. and N. Schady, 2006: [Getting girls into school: Evidence from a scholarship program in Cambodia](#). World Bank Policy Research Working Paper WP3910.

⁸² Greene, Margaret. 2014. “[Ending child marriage in a generation: What research is needed?](#)” Ford Foundation. 11.

5 CASE STUDIES

5.1 Berhane Hewan

One of the most promising and interesting interventions in recent years is Berhane Hewan in Ethiopia. The UNFPA explains:

[Berhane Hewan] promoted: schooling, functional literacy, life skills; and sexual and reproductive health and HIV information and services for girls. Girls' clubs served as platforms from which married and unmarried girls found social support, accessed mentors, and learned new skills. [...]

Three years after the initiative was piloted in 2004, an evaluation found that girls in the programme area were nearly three times more likely to be in school than non-programme participants, and were 90 percent less likely to be married. Moreover, married girls in the programme area were nearly three times more likely to have used family planning compared to married girls in the control group. The programme had the greatest impact among girls aged 10 to 14. With support from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the programme is now being taken to scale.⁸³

A study in the International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health confirmed the program's successes, calling it "one of the first rigorously evaluated interventions".⁸⁴

The program also included economic incentives:

To offset the economic benefits associated with marriage, Berhane Hewan included an economic incentive during the pilot phase. During registration, parents of unmarried girls were promised a sheep at the end of the two-year period if they agreed not to marry their daughters for the duration of the program.⁸⁵

⁸³ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2012. "[Marrying too young: end child marriage.](#)" 54.

⁸⁴ Erulkar, A. & Muthengi, E. 2009. "[Evaluation of Berhane Hewan: A Program to Delay Child Marriage in Rural Ethiopia.](#)" International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 35, 6-14.

⁸⁵ Muthengi, E.; A. Erulkar. 2010. "[Building Programmes to Address Child Marriage: the Berhane Hewan Experience in Ethiopia.](#)" Population Council, New York. 8. See this report for a thorough analysis of *Berhane Hewan*.

5.2 The Zomba Cash Transfer

The ICRW offers some context for the Zomba Cash Transfer:

The Zomba Cash Transfer program in Malawi has evaluated the role of conditional cash transfer programs for changing schooling, marriage, and sexual behaviors of adolescent girls in Malawi. In a study published in 2010, the authors find that girls who were not in school at the beginning of the program, and were offered conditional cash transfers, were 40 percent less likely to marry after one year than girls in the control group—suggesting that in this setting, schooling does have a protective effect for girls who are at higher risk of early marriage and pregnancy.⁸⁶

The 2010 study referenced above states:

An average offer of US\$10/month conditional on satisfactory school attendance – plus direct payment of secondary school fees – led to significant declines in early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and self-reported sexual activity among program beneficiaries after just one year of program implementation. For program beneficiaries who were out of school at baseline, the probability of getting married or becoming pregnant declined by more than 40% and 30%, respectively. More than a third of all program beneficiaries also delayed their onset of sexual activity by a full year. Overall, these results suggest that CCT programs not only serve as useful tools for improving school attendance, but may also reduce sexual activity, as well as teen pregnancy and early marriage.⁸⁷

5.3 Apni Beti Apna Dhan (ABAD)

A report by [Dasra](#) explains the background behind the ABAD program:

In the 1990s, the government launched various conditional cash transfer schemes (CCTs) that sought to delay early marriages. Some were directly linked to child marriage. For example, in several states where such marriages are widespread, parents are offered a cash incentive to marry their daughters after the legal age is attained.⁸⁸

And a report by the ICRW released this year explains the ABAD program in particular:

The scheme targeted poor households and disadvantaged caste groups, offering two points of transfer: 1) a small cash disbursement to mothers (500 Indian Rupees) within 15 days of delivering a eligible girl; and 2) within three months of birth, and on enrollment, the government purchased a savings bond of Rs.2500 in

⁸⁶ ICRW. 2011. [Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows](#). 18.

⁸⁷ Baird, S., Chirwa, E., McIntosh, C., & Özler, B. (2010). [The short-term impacts of a schooling conditional cash transfer program on the sexual behavior of young women](#). Health economics, 19(S1), 55-68.

⁸⁸ Dasra, 2014. [“Marry me later: Preventing child marriage and early pregnancy in India.”](#) 30.

the name of the daughter which was redeemable at a maturity of 25,000 Indian Rupees at age 18, provided the girl was not married.

The initial cohort of beneficiaries turned 18 in 2012-2013, marking the first opportunity to determine whether the cash incentive has been a sufficient motivator for delayed marriage. A sound evaluation of the ABAD program's long-term benefit and its impact on the timing of marriage is a first-of-its-kind evaluation, offering key insights and lessons not only for the Indian government and policymakers, but many others across the world.⁸⁹

It finds:

This first round of our evaluation of ABAD aimed to assess whether the beneficiary status of girls in the program affected their educational attainment. We found their status to have a positive effect: A larger proportion of girls who were part of the program (beneficiaries) remained in school than those who were not (non-beneficiaries). Table 1 shows that this was true for girls in the older cohort (76% beneficiary vs. 63% non-beneficiary) and younger cohorts (91% beneficiary vs. 87% non-beneficiary).⁹⁰

And concludes:

After controlling for other variables (see Table 8) and selection, the beneficiary status of girl positively and significantly influences the probability of her being currently in school. The effect of ABAD on girls' education status (whether a girl is currently in school) is positive and strongly significant, suggesting a positive effect of the program on one of the key study outcomes. [...]

While over the duration of this CCT, families had not availed the cash benefit, the knowledge of the protracted benefit clearly influenced their decision to invest in their daughters' education.⁹¹

It ends on a note of caution:

These findings suggest that a CCT program designed to delay the age of marriage can improve educational outcomes for girls. However, we do not yet know whether the ABAD CCT has delayed girls' age of marriage. Our next round of survey results will reveal what impact ABAD had on age of marriage, and will provide a more complete picture of the pathways between incentives, education, marriage and the overall value of girls.⁹²

⁸⁹ Nanda, Priya; Nitin Datta and Priya Das. 2014. "[Impact on Marriage: Program Assessment of Conditional Cash Transfers.](#)" ICRW. 1-2.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁹¹ Ibid 7-8.

⁹² Ibid, 8.

However, given we already have strong reason to think that remaining in education prevents child marriage, it is reasonable to assume the findings on marriage will be similarly positive.

5.4 The Punjab Female School Stipend Program

A conditional cash transfer program in Pakistan proves similarly promising:

The Punjab Female School Stipend Program, a female-targeted conditional cash transfer program in Pakistan, was implemented in response to gender gaps in education. An early evaluation of the program shows that the enrollment of eligible girls in middle school increased in the short term by nearly 9 percentage points. This paper uses regression discontinuity and difference-in-difference analyses to show that five years into the program implementation positive impacts do persist. Beneficiary adolescent girls are more likely to progress through and complete middle school and work less. There is suggestive evidence that participating girls delay their marriage and have fewer births by the time they are 19 years old. Girls who are exposed to the program later, and who are eligible for the benefits given in high school, increase their rates of matriculating into and completing high school. The persistence of impacts can potentially translate into gains in future productivity, consumption, inter-generational human capital accumulation and desired fertility.⁹³

⁹³ Alam, A., Baez, J., & Del Carpio, X. V. (2011). [Does cash for school influence young women's behavior in the longer term? evidence from Pakistan](#). IZA Discussion Paper No. 5703

6 LIMITATIONS

It is worth noting various limitations that exist in the research on child marriage to date.

Margaret Greene reports:

Economists at the World Bank have been exploring the measurement of child marriage and have found conventional approaches sorely lacking. As they state it, “...most existing studies simply report the incidence of child marriage, that is the share of girls who marry early (before the age of 18) within a population. Other measures that would take into account how young girls marry are often not provided, and no tests are carried to assess the robustness of comparisons or statistics about child marriage between countries, between groups within countries, or between time periods with respect to the age threshold used to identify child marriage. Yet, the consequences of child marriage are not the same whether one marries at the age of 12 or 18.” In general, however, the costs of child marriage for a girl’s health, education, and wellbeing are greater the earlier she marries.⁹⁴

The ICRW also notes:

[O]nly 10 percent of the programs identified in the 2007 ICRW scan had been evaluated. Still fewer were evaluated using rigorous methodologies or included information about the evaluation process. Thus, while we know something about what has been attempted to prevent child marriage, we know little about how successful these efforts have been.⁹⁵

[T]he vast majority of programs have had limited outreach and have yet to go to scale.⁹⁶

[P]rogram costs and infrastructural demands may make scale and sustainability unlikely. In fact, most successful programs focused on a combination of girls and communities have yet to scale up.⁹⁷

Still, it adds more optimistically that “the newer school and incentive-based programs bring a combination of established rigor and intervention simplicity”.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Greene, Margaret. 2014. “[Ending child marriage in a generation: What research is needed?](#)” Ford Foundation. 4. This report offers substantial advice on problems and future research directions.

She cites Nguyen, M., & Wodon, Q. 2012. “Measuring child marriage.” *Economics Bulletin* 32:1 (398-411).

⁹⁵ ICRW. 2011. [Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows](#). 5.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 7.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 24.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

A Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health report also argues for the need for more rigorous evaluation of interventions.⁹⁹

However, the ICRW notes that the problem may lie more in current research norms rather than child marriage evaluations in particular:

[R]esearchers increasingly acknowledge that interventions aiming for community-based social change are not ideally suited for traditional randomized methodology. In the realm of child marriage prevention, more creative evaluation approaches may be necessary to effectively understand and appreciate the extent to which the desirable change has materialized. Researchers, implementers and donors working in the field will have to decide whether they are wedded to positivist social science or are willing to explore emerging thinking on “systems change” and “collective impact,” which may be better suited to the endeavor of child marriage prevention.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), 2012. “[Reaching child bridges - Knowledge summary](#).” 4.

¹⁰⁰ ICRW. 2011. [Solutions to End Child Marriage: What the Evidence Shows](#). 25.

They cite Kania, J. & Kramer, M. 2011. [Collective Impact](#). *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

7 CHARITIES

As the sources and case studies here have shown, the problem of child marriage is worked on primarily by private foundations such as Nike and Ford, and states like the Indian government.¹⁰¹

However, some private philanthropy in the area exists. The [Global Giving Foundation](#) manages donations to [The Girl Effect Fund](#), which in turn funds [twelve different projects](#). Most of the projects resemble category one interventions as seen in section four: empowering girls with information and skills to enable self-advocacy. In this respect they also resemble the successful Berhane Hewan case study. However, none of the projects involve the conditional cash transfers which we have also found reason to believe are effective. No guarantees appear to be made about how donations are used. It is also unclear how transparent the programs are and whether they track their effectiveness.

Similar judgements apply to [Catapult](#). This site facilitates the funding of various projects aimed at preventing child marriage. Most involve category one interventions. None appear to involve conditional cash transfers. Again, it is unclear how donations are used and how impact is checked.

In personal correspondence, Giovanna Lauro of [Promundo](#) spoke very positively of an organisation called [Tostan](#), which claims to have secured through its Community Empowerment Program the public abandonment of child marriage by 7,000 communities.¹⁰² This is a category three intervention. Studies on the impact of these did not arise in my research. Tostan [welcome donations](#), but precisely how they will be used is unclear.

Girls Not Brides comprises a [partnership](#) of 358 “civil society organisations committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential”. It is possible a transparent charity that works on effective interventions is listed, but if so my search has not found it.

¹⁰¹ This judgment is supported by Dasra, 2014. “[Marry me later: Preventing child marriage and early pregnancy in India](#).” 35.

¹⁰² Tostan: [Child Protection](#).

8 CONCLUSION

When we analyse causes, three issues must be distinguished and addressed:

1. The cause's significance. This involves identifying what effects the problem has, and whether they are damaging enough to justify researching them further.
2. The effectiveness of interventions. This involves establishing what solutions, if any, work; whether proven interventions exist and how successful they are.
3. The relevant charities. This involves seeing whether any charities exist which enact the effective solutions for the significant cause; whether they are transparent, self-critical and have room for more funding.

Child marriage seems to pass the first two tests, but not the third.

Section three established the cause's significance. Child marriage is enslavement. It causes domestic violence and rape and may increase the transmission of HIV. It also ensures a girl's education is abruptly ended. This in turn causes higher rates of child death and death by childbirth, increased fertility and diminished child welfare, reduced economic productivity and political activism.

Sections four and five established that effective interventions exist. In particular, programs enabling girls to self-advocate, and cash transfers to parents conditional on their daughters remaining in education, have succeeded in preventing child marriage. This latter intervention has the advantage of being simple and scalable.

But section seven noted that most work on child marriage is currently conducted by states and foundations, so opportunities for private philanthropy are scarce. Of the opportunities identified, none practise the cash intervention that seems most promising. Nor is it clear that they are sufficiently transparent and self-critical and it is not clear precisely how further funding would be used.

Going forward, I recommend that it is worth looking further into whether the third test can be overcome. If good charities working to prevent child marriage can be found, given the significance of the cause and the effectiveness of the interventions that this report has hoped to establish, such charities should be taken very seriously as giving recommendations for now or in the future.

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1st July 2014.

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