

# The theory of change of "girls not bride organization"

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



Throughout the world, marriage as the union of opposite sex under legal age is considered as a momentous event of every girl's life and calls for a celebration as part of an adult life that everyone will undergo. But the practice of early marriage gives no such reason for a celebration. The imposition of a marriage partner upon a child means that a girl or boy's childhood is being shortened gearing to compromise their fundamental rights. As defined by the UNICEF, "early marriage" or its other term "child marriage" is a marriage of a girl or boy before the age of 18 and refers to both formal marriages and informal unions in which children under the age of 18 live with a partner as if married. Child marriage affects both girls and boys, but it affects girls disproportionately, especially in South Asia.

Birth, marriage and death are the standard trio of key events in most people's life. But only one which is the marriage - is a matter of choice. The right to exercise that choice was recognized as a principle of law even in Roman times and has long been established in international human rights instruments. Yet many girls, and a smaller number of boys, enter marriage without any chance of exercising their right to choose. Some are forced into marriage at a very early age. Others are simply too young to make an informed decision about their marriage partner or about the implications of marriage itself. They may have given what passes for 'consent' in the eyes of custom or the law, but in reality, consent to their binding union has been made by others on their behalf. The assumption is that once a girl is married, she has become a woman - even if she is only 12.

Equally, where a boy is made to marry, he is now a man and must put away childish things. While the age of marriage is generally on the rise, early marriage - marriage of children and adolescents below the age of 18 - is still widely practised (UNICEF, 2001). According to UNICEF, South Asia has the highest rates of child marriage in the world. Almost half (45%) of all women aged 20-24 years reported being married before the age of 18. Almost one in five girls (17%) are married before the age of 15. Moreover, UNICEF strongly reiterates that child marriage violates children's rights and places them at high risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse.

Some countries that dominantly practice early or child marriage are the following: India which has the largest number of brides in the world - one-third of the global total; Bangladesh that has the highest rate of child marriage in Asia (the fourth highest rate in the world) and; Nepal which has also one the highest rates of child marriage in Asia for both boys and girls (<https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/child-protection/child-marriage>). But since 1985 child marriage is declining from 63% to 45% in 2010 in South Asia, with the decline being especially marked for girls under 15 (32% in 1985 to 17% in 2010).

The marriage of girls aged 15-18 is however still commonplace, so more efforts are needed to protect older adolescents from marriage (<https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/child-protection/child-marriage>). While early marriage takes many different forms and has various causes, one issue is paramount. Whether it happens to a girl or a boy, early marriage is a violation of human rights. The right to free and full consent to a marriage is

recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in many subsequent human rights instruments – consent that cannot be ‘ free and full’ when at least one partner is very immature. For both girls and boys, early marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts, cutting off educational opportunity and chances of personal growth. For girls, in addition, it will almost certainly mean premature pregnancy and childbearing, and is likely to lead to a lifetime of domestic and sexual subservience over which they have no control.

Yet many societies, primarily in Africa and South Asia, continue to support the idea that girls should marry at or soon after puberty. Their spouses are likely to be a few years older than they are, but may be more than twice their age. Parents and heads of families make marital choices for daughters and sons with little regard for the personal implications. Rather, they look upon marriage as a family-building strategy, an economic arrangement or a way to protect girls from unwelcome sexual advances.

In the latter part of the 20th century, interest centred on the behavioural determinants fuelling rapid population growth, for obvious reasons. Early marriage extends a woman’s reproductive span, thereby contributing to large family size, especially in the absence of contraception. More recently, advocates of safe motherhood have turned their attention to this issue. Pregnancies that occur ‘ too early’ – when a woman’s body is not fully mature – constitute a major risk to the survival and future health of both mother and child. Concern with the special health needs of adolescents has

also recently been growing in a world where young people are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

However, from a demographic and health perspective, early marriage is seen primarily as a contributory factor to early child-bearing (Macfarlane, Alan (1986). During the past decade, the movement for ' Education for All' has stressed the need to enrol more girls in school and to keep them from dropping out before completion. In this context, the custom of early marriage is acknowledged as one of the reasons for girls' exclusion from school, especially in cultural settings where girls are raised for a lifetime confined to household occupations and are expected to marry very young. Very recently, the situation of children in need of special protection, notably girls vulnerable to sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS, suggests that early marriage is being used as a strategy to protect girls from sexual exposure, or to pass the economic burden for their care to others.

Thus, early marriage lingers on as a culturally and socially sanctioned practice according to some traditional sets of values and, among some highly stressed populations. To date, most studies on the effects of early marriage have focused on premature sex and pregnancy and school drop-out (Kumar et. al. 1991). Despite the efforts of reformers in the early part of the 20th century, early marriage has received scant attention from the modern women's rights and children's rights movements. A recent study by UNICEF in six West African countries showed that 44 per cent of 20-24 year old women in Niger were married under the age of 15. The need to follow

tradition, reinforce ties among or between communities, and protect girls from out-of-wedlock pregnancy was the main reasons given.

Here in the Philippines, several tribal groups still practising early marriage as part of their custom and tradition. Among the tribal groups are: Subanen, Muslim, Yakan and other tribes. In 2014, Philippines has about 1.1 million children who are out of the school aged 5-15 years old whom 420,000 aged 6-11 years old are should be in primary and 606,000 aged 12-15 years old are should be in secondary. This further reveals that 3 out of 5 are boys and 50% of the 1.1 million children are from the families of the 25 percent of the bottom ladder (<http://www.philippinesbasiceducation.us/2017/04/poverty-and-school-dropouts.html> ).

Most children left school because of the following reasons: lack of interests- as interest motivates children to go to school because it is one of the intrinsic motivating factors that keeps children to be present in school. Second is poverty, as it blinded the children's view of the future because poor children have less opportunities to deal with because most of their time and resources are mostly contained on their basic needs, shelter and food which made them not to discover their passion and interest. And third is disabilities and illness. This constitutes the major reason behind why children leave school (<http://www.philippinesbasiceducation.us/2017/04/poverty-and-school-dropouts.html> ). It is through this factor that the researcher is motivated to conduct the study to come up with a valid intervention program that would help the female of the Subanen tribe of Tamarok, Ponot

Zamboanga del Norte to continue their education as this is one of their basic rights-right to education.

The study is anchored on the Theory of Change of Girls not Bride organization. The Theory of Change has seven levels, from the problem statement at the bottom, to the vision statement at the top. The theory has six guiding principles as follows: First, the theory does not only focus on preventing child marriage but also on mitigation and support of girls who are already married. Second, the focus on the impact of child marriages on girls does not mean the impact on boys should be neglected. However, focusing on girls is necessary in order to highlight the importance of gender equality. Third, the theory includes both forms of child marriages: formal and informal unions. Fourth, in order to end child marriage, action by multiple actors at many levels is required. Fifth, although change happens locally, national, regional and global actions are necessary in order to “ create an environment that offers girls opportunities beyond the traditional roles envisaged for them. And last principle is both parties should be freely and fully agreed to their marriage.

However, this is rarely the case where one of the spouses is under the age of 18. Moreover the Theory of Change contains seven levels:

1. Problem,
2. Catalyzing strategy,
3. Strategies,
4. Outcomes,

5. Results,

6. Impact and

7. Vision.

However, as Girls not Brides points out “ it is important to recognise that the relationships between different levels are not causal or linear but represent a broader view of how change will occur.” The theory have different levels that encompass the following: Problem: As a first step, it is necessary to understand the problem of child marriage, to be aware of the different settings in which child marriage takes place, as well as the different drivers of it. And finally, it is important to be aware of the need to address the issue.