



LEYUALEM, AGE 14 (Ethiopia)

Family members place a white cloth over the head of Leyualem as they prepare to take her to her new groom's home in Ethiopia.

Photo by Stephanie Sinclair / VII Photo / Too Young To Wed



CHAPTER

05

WHAT TO EXPECT IF
CURRENT TRENDS CONTINUE

CHAPTER 5

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This chapter describes the challenges that developing countries can expect if current levels of child marriage continue—a future that, in some senses, is already defined by the past and present population dynamics. The analysis is based on girls already born who could marry or enter into union during the period 2010-2030. Over 67 million women aged 20 to 24 in 2010 had entered into marriage or union before age 18—about 13.5 million girls every year. Developing countries face the prospect of a growing number of child marriages, more teenage pregnancies and more girls suffering maternal death and disability. They also face the multiple impacts of population growth.

TARGETING CURRENT AND FUTURE CHILD BRIDES

Looking to the future, it is important to understand who child brides are and what challenges they face. As we know, the majority of child marriages are concentrated in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Just over sixty percent of child brides in developing regions have no education.

When formulating a course of action targeting child marriage, at least two key population groups should be considered: 1) girls under 18 who are already married or in union and facing the consequences of child marriage, and 2) girls already born that are *at risk* of child marriage, in particular girls living in rural areas in situation of poverty, and with low education levels. The latter include girls aged 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 and 15-19 in 2010. Chapter 6 discusses the options available for the development of policies and programmes to benefit both groups.

If child marriage trends are to continue, worldwide, 142 million girls will be married in the next decade (during the period 2011-2020)³³. This translates into an average of 14.2 million girls who will marry every year. These numbers could be even higher, reaching 151 million girls by the end of the period 2021-2030 (Table 2). This potential increase in the total number of girls marrying before age 18 is determined by already bigger cohorts of already born girls. The majority of developing societies are still growing in size as a result of declining levels of mortality and slower reductions in fertility, resulting in age structures dominated by younger cohorts.

If current trends continue, worldwide, 142 million girls will be married in the next decade.

By 2030, the number of child brides marrying each year will have grown from 14.2 in 2010 to 15.1 million, that is over 14 per cent if current trends continue

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF WOMEN 20 TO 24 YEARS OLD WHO WILL MARRY OR ENTER INTO UNION ANNUALLY BEFORE AGE 18 IF CURRENT LEVELS OF CHILD MARRIAGE PERSIST FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS (MILLION)

REGION	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Sub-Saharan Africa	13.1	13.7	14.0	14.5	15.0
East and Southern Africa	7.0	7.2	7.4	7.7	8.0
West and Central Africa	6.2	6.4	6.6	6.8	7.1
Arab States	6.0	6.2	6.4	6.6	6.9
East Asia and the Pacific*	9.7	10.1	10.3	10.7	11.1
South Asia	24.4	25.3	25.9	26.8	27.9
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	5.8	6.0	6.1	6.3	6.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	8.5	8.8	9.1	9.4	9.7
TOTAL	67.4	70.2	71.8	74.3	77.2
TOTAL PER YEAR	13.5	14.0	14.4	14.9	15.4

Source: UNFPA database.

NO TIME TO LOSE

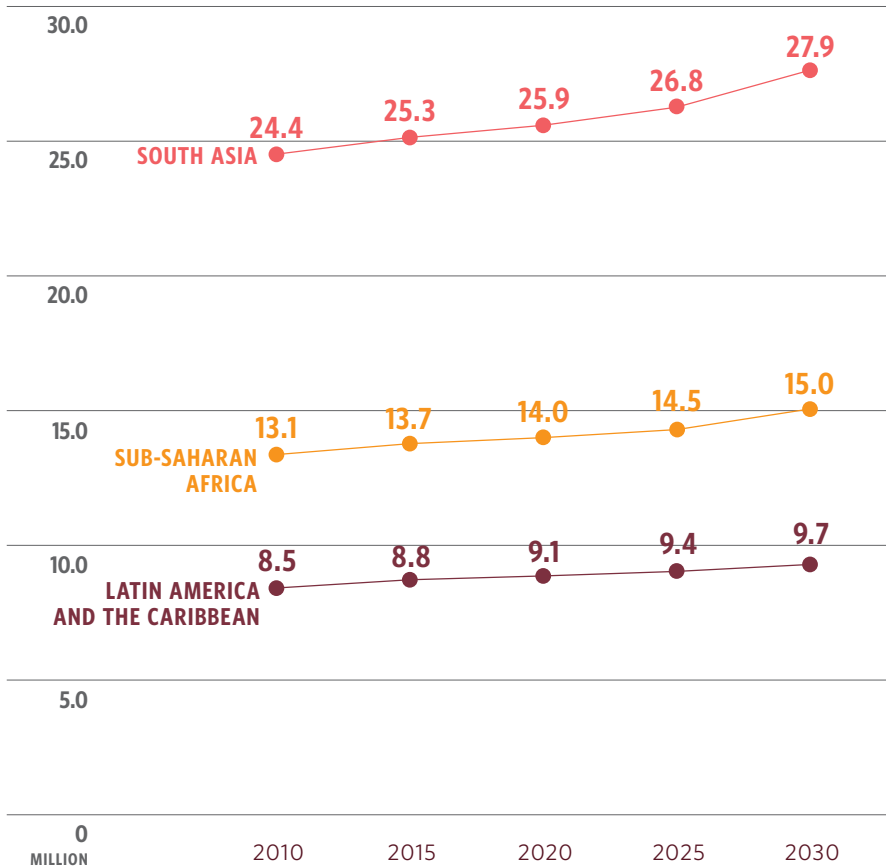
The majority of girls affected by child marriage are living in South Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa (Table 2 and Figure 13). In South Asia, the number of child brides is likely to increase from 24.4 million (4.9 million per year) girls in 2010 to 27.9 million (5.6 million per year) in 2030. Over a 20-year period (2010–2030), a total of 130 million girls in South Asia alone are likely to marry or enter into union as children. This analysis is based on trends in the population dynamics from the past 15 years and assumes no change in the prevalence of child marriage estimated for 2010 through to 2030.

The implications are staggering, and demand swift action. First, strong commitment is needed from all parties to eliminate the practice of child marriage. Even at lower rates, the absolute number of girls likely to marry before age 18 will remain high as a result of population growth. Extra efforts will therefore be required to sustain the reduction in the total number of girls affected by child marriage. Second, even under the best possible scenario, it should be assumed that some girls will marry before age 18. This will demand action on an array of issues around sexual and reproductive health for which societies, governments and communities in particular, should be prepared.

Over the next 20 years, 130 million girls in South Asia alone are likely to marry as children

FIGURE 12

NUMBER OF WOMEN 20-24 YEARS OLD WHO WILL MARRY OR ENTER INTO UNION BEFORE AGE 18 OVER THE PERIOD 2010-2030 BY REGION (MILLION)



Source: UNFPA database using DHS or MICS data from 78 developing countries over the period 2000–2011.

Understanding the dynamics of child marriage within countries will also enable policymakers and programmers to target their efforts most effectively to curb this harmful practice. In India, for example, data from three consecutive household surveys showed that the rate of child marriage among girls under age 15 is declining at more than twice the rate than among girls under 18 years of age (30 per cent reduction versus 13 per cent reduction) (Table 3). While this can be interpreted as a sign of progress, it is still not sufficient to guarantee children their full rights in terms of education, sexual and reproductive health and the right to self-determination.

Progress, but not enough: In India, rates of child marriage among girls under age 15 are falling twice as fast as those among girls under 18

TABLE 3: INDIA
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 20 TO 24 WHO MARRIED BEFORE AGE 15 AND BEFORE AGE 18 AND PERCENTAGE CHANGE OBSERVED IN RATES OF CHILD MARRIAGE RECORDED IN THREE NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEYS

AGE AT MARRIAGE OR UNION	NFHS 1992-1993 (1)	NFHS 1999 (2)	NFHS 2005-2006 (3)	CHANGE (1)-(3)	CHANGE (2)-(3)	CHANGE (1)-(2)
Before 18 years	54.2%	50.0%	47.4%	12.5%	5.2%	7.8%
Before 15 years	26.1%	23.5%	18.2%	30.3%	22.6%	10.0%

Source: National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) in India, 1992-1993, 1999, and 2005-2006.