

Ending Child Marriage is Achievable: Evidence-based and Context-specific Strategies

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GENDER
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LAB

Ending Child Marriage

1. Ending child marriage is an **achievable** goal.
2. Research has identified **what works** (and what doesn't).
3. Need for investments in **locally-adapted** and **evidence-based** initiatives.



Education

Consistent evidence that increasing schooling reduces child marriage

- **Tuition/scholarships:** Niger¹, Bangladesh², Ghana³
- Expanded **compulsory education** policies: Peru⁴, Türkiye⁵
- **Fee elimination and/or school construction:** Benin⁶, Malawi and Uganda⁷, Nigeria⁸, Zimbabwe⁹

¹Giacobino et al. 2024; ² Sara and Priyanka 2023; ³ Duflo et al. 2021; ⁴ Weitzman 2018; ⁵ Kirdar et al. 2018; ⁶ Deschênes and Hotte 2024; ⁷ Behrman et al. 2017; ⁸ Deschênes and Hotte 2023, ⁹ Yu et al. 2024



Age of Marriage Laws

Banning child marriage increases average age at marriage; strongest effects on reducing marriage at youngest ages¹

Examples: Nigeria 2003 child marriage ban², Ethiopia 2000 Family Code³

But enforcement of laws varies and can have negative unintended consequences:

- Limited reach of formal legal system⁴
- Push to informal unions⁵
- Law can be used to undermine adolescents' agency or create barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services⁶



¹ Wilson 2022; ² Gninafon 2024; ³ McGavock 2021; Rokicki 2021; Garcia-Hombrados 2022; ⁴ Wilson 2022; ⁵ Bellés-Obrero and Lombardi 2023;

⁶ Watson 2024

Multi-component and norms shifting interventions

Mixed success in reducing child marriage

- Drivers of child marriage vary across contexts.¹
- Norms shifting and girls' empowerment interventions only sometimes reduce child marriage.²
- Multi-component interventions also have mixed success and may be difficult to scale.³
- However, locally-tailored, comprehensive interventions can have large effects and may be appropriate for contexts where early marriage is stubbornly high.⁴

Pathways to Prosperity for Adolescent Girls in Africa

Kehinde Ajayi and Estelle Koussoubé, Editors



¹ Melnikas et al. 2023; Psaki et al. 2021; ² Greene et al. 2024; Buchmann et al. 2023; ³ Malhotra and Elnakib 2021; ⁴ Cohen et al. 2026

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Thank you!

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