

# CHILD MARRIAGE



IN



AN EVIDENCE REVIEW

# SOUTH ASIA

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# FOREWORD

Child marriage remains pervasive in South Asia. 30 per cent of women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18 and 4.3 per cent of men were married as boys. South Asia carries a shocking 40 per cent of the global burden of child brides. Marrying as a child can limit the agency these children have to make decisions about their lives, impacting on their ability to access their rights. Child marriage puts at risk the rights of adolescent girls and boys to education and to health, to protection and safety, to leisure and play. Everyone has the right to choose when and who to marry, whether and when to have children, and how many, as enshrined in CEDAW and the CRC, and at the International Conference on Population and Development which put rights and choices at the heart of sustainable development. Each of these rights are put at risk when a person marries as a child.

As this evidence review shows, child marriage and its drivers are complex and vary within and across countries. Child marriage may be arranged or adolescents themselves may decide to marry before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It may be a way to unite families, perceived as necessary to secure a girl's future and safety, a way to protect a girl's innocence and reputation, and exemplify a boy's manliness and readiness for adult responsibilities. Whether by choice or coercion, marrying as a child can result in health concerns, remove children from their protective environment, deter them from getting an education, and force them into adult roles such as looking after a household, raising a family, and entering into the labour force.

UNICEF and UNFPA are committed to ending this harmful practice in South Asia and globally. This requires a holistic approach – to ensure that there is access to education and that health care, including sexual and reproductive health services and information, is available and appropriately tailored to adolescents. It requires that children and adolescents as well as parents, understand what a healthy non-violent relationship is, and know the risks of marrying too young.

The UNFPA- UNICEF Joint Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage began in 2015. Phase One (2015-2019) generated a significant body of knowledge and evidence on the drivers and consequences of the practice as well as the effectiveness of programming interventions designed to end child marriage. This publication reviews the latest evidence on the practice of child marriage in South Asia over the life of the Global Programme. It reviews the influence of gender norms, economics and societal expectations on child marriage, as well as the relationship between child marriage and health, education, violence and policies and laws. The report presents and synthesizes the latest evidence and implications for programming in order to ensure effective programme interventions. We hope that it will prove useful to policy makers and practitioners in their efforts to end the practice of child marriage in South Asia.

We all wish to see a world where all girls and boys, men and women, can choose freely whether, when and who to marry – one of the most crucial life decisions of all.



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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ABAD</b>	–	Apni Beti Apna Dhan
<b>ADHS</b>	–	Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey
<b>AFR</b>	–	Adolescent Fertility Rate
<b>AIDS</b>	–	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>ASRH</b>	–	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>BDHS</b>	–	Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey
<b>CCC</b>	–	Conditional Cash Transfer
<b>CRC</b>	–	Committee on the Rights of the Child
<b>CMRA</b>	–	Child Marriage Restraint Act
<b>CEDAW</b>	–	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CSE</b>	–	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
<b>EGM</b>	–	Expert Group Meeting
<b>GII</b>	–	Gender Inequality Index
<b>GOA</b>	–	Government of Afghanistan
<b>HIV</b>	–	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IDHS</b>	–	India Demographic and Health Survey
<b>IPV</b>	–	Intimate Partner Violence
<b>MICS</b>	–	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
<b>NDHS</b>	–	Nepal Demographic and Health Survey
<b>NFHS</b>	–	National Family Health Survey
<b>NPA/C</b>	–	National Plan of Action for Children
<b>NSDP</b>	–	Net State Domestic Product
<b>PDHS</b>	–	Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey
<b>RCT</b>	–	Randomized Control Trial
<b>SDES</b>	–	Socio Demographic and Economic Survey
<b>SLDHS</b>	–	Sri Lanka Demographic and Health Survey
<b>SRH</b>	–	Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>UNICEF</b>	–	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNFPA</b>	–	United Nations Population Fund

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The topic of child marriage is generating high global interest, as evidenced by a joint initiative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The joint Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage and related initiatives is particularly salient in South Asia. Scholars and practitioners alike are engaged in research on a wide array of topics in the region ranging from national level trends and legal frameworks to rigorous evaluations of programming to in-depth qualitative examinations of subnational cultural practices and changes in the agency and empowerment of girls. In 2016, UNICEF and UNFPA hosted an expert group meeting to discuss the prevailing evidence and identify opportunities for future work. Since then, research and publications on the topic have proliferated, resulting in significant growth in the understanding of the phenomenon of child marriage, and warranting this review. What follows is a summary of that process, a rapid evidence review of child marriage programmes, policies, developments and debates in South Asia. The review was not intended to be comprehensive. It brings together lessons from materials such as peer reviewed journal articles, policy documentation from government and international agencies, and quality grey literature (including NGO reports and evaluations) produced since 2014.

Rates of child marriage across the region are falling, but the practice continues to be widespread and often concentrated in particular geographic regions or among certain cultural groups. Much of this review is focused on identifying successes and lessons learned from them as well as missteps or setbacks and how these might be avoided in the future. The review examines a growing awareness and understanding that the problem of child

marriage is not only one of poverty that can be fixed through conditional cash transfers, or simply an issue of social norms. In many places, child marriage is a deeply held social and cultural practice that intersects with restrictive gender and social norms, access to education and health resources, coherent national legal frameworks that intersect with and reflect the cultural and religious institutions underpinning child marriage, intimate partner violence, and more. Viewing child marriage as part of a system that rests on patriarchal attitudes and devalues girls' and women's' agency alongside poverty, perceptions of vulnerability, and a pervasive desire to conform to perceived norms – often while ignoring personal beliefs or knowledge of adverse effects – exerts significant effects on the ability of programming and legal frameworks to support young girls and prevent early marriage.

An important change from the 2016 meeting is the advancement of measurement and evaluation. The completion of several randomized control trials (RCTs) on child marriage programming provide answers, but more often than not raise further questions regarding what sort of interventions are appropriate for which groups and what are the associated unintended consequences. Acknowledging the significant heterogeneity within countries, more focused and in-depth qualitative work has revealed novel findings and given nuance to strongly held beliefs on child marriage. These traditionally held truisms have in the past hampered programming from reaching its full potential. Moving forward with an increased focus on acknowledging heterogeneity and identifying the correct tool to measure and evaluate a phenomenon is an important evolution in child marriage research.

## TRENDS

For many countries in South Asia, child marriage of girls is decreasing. But information on the experiences of boys as child grooms is scant, and this aspect of child marriage remains largely unexplored. Child marriage rates are falling in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan, but there is insufficient information to say something similar for Afghanistan and a lack of data over time for Sri Lanka. Some countries (e.g., Bangladesh and India) are experiencing a stronger decline in child marriage than others and in Sri Lanka rates are currently low. Certain groups (e.g., closed caste communities in India and Nepal), regions (e.g., some islands in Maldives), and states (e.g., Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh in India) are showing increasing rates of child marriage.

Marriage 'type' is also evolving in the region with several studies in recent years noting an increase in love marriages, elopements and cohabitation. While many studies do not differentiate between these types of marriage, more information is needed to distinguish these own-choice unions from each other as well as to better understand their origins and the consequences, if any. Arranged marriages are still preferred in many areas and own-choice marriages stigmatized, highlighting again the intersecting nature of girls' lack of agency, social norms, and adverse outcomes associated with early marriage.

## DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE

**Economic situation and shocks.** The relationship between poverty and child marriage is complex. Although the literature has traditionally shown that girls with less access to economic resources were more at risk for child marriage, recent research identifies that girls from higher income brackets may also be at risk, pushed by normative and social pressures to join families and maintain a girl's 'honour'. Factors tangential to wealth that are

steeped in societal pressures and social norms, as well as national or regional level economic situations, are also likely important to predicting child marriage. There has been more of a focus on the perception of economic vulnerability, which is difficult to measure but shown to be important qualitatively, as well as the economic shocks themselves, which may be more easily measured, showing mixed effects on the propensity to wed early. The intersection of economics and norms present a place where research may focus to identify tipping points.

**Education.** Among researchers, the growing consensus is to urge caution regarding causal inferences between education and child marriage. Studies find that simply attaining education or measuring/enforcing attendance is not enough to reduce the risk of child marriage. Specific elements of girls' education, such as literacy, quality, completion of secondary school, and aspirations or quality of post-schooling opportunities may be important for the future benefits they predict, rather than attainment itself. Instead, components of education that are important to include are girls' literacy levels, completion of secondary education, and mother's education.

**Persistent and evolving social and gender norms.** Social and gender norms underpin all forms of child marriage and should be accounted for in any programming or policymaking. Relatively fixed social and gender norms include patriarchal views on puberty for both boys and girls that dominate readiness for marriage, restriction on girls' mobility and voice as they get older, devaluing the worth of girls and linking their status to marriage, and norms underlying dowry practices (often exacerbated by climate related emergencies). Strongly held perceptions of community or society level norms may work to keep practices going even in the face of opposing personal beliefs or knowledge of adverse consequences. In other words, even when gatekeepers and parents know child marriage is harmful, it is not enough to stop the practice.



Some norms are changing, including increasing educational and future aspirations for girls, increasing adolescent empowerment, shifting gender roles and decreasing marital age gap between men and women due to marriage squeeze, and improving labour force participation for women. Recognizing where norms are changing is important since contexts where norms are in flux are most amenable to changing child marriage practices.

## LINKAGES BETWEEN CHILD MARRIAGE AND OTHER SECTORS

**Sexual and reproductive health.** Alongside declining child marriage rates, overall regional fertility rates are falling. However, within country estimates show that marital fertility rates are high, and the majority of adolescent childbearing occurs within marriage even though there is an increasing number of adolescents in dating relationships. As most fertility happens within marriage, it is likely that pregnancies occurring outside of marriage lead to marriage or marriage is the point at which sexual initiation and childbearing begin. Thus, programmes and policies should focus on a) providing comprehensive sexuality education and b) delaying adolescent childbearing instead of only delaying marriage.

**Gender-based violence and child marriage.** While some countries clearly show that adolescent brides are more at-risk for violence than adult brides, other countries do not show clear patterns. Ending child marriage will not substantially reduce intimate partner violence due to the intersection of patriarchal norms and associated acceptable behaviours within relationships. While laws are in place that protect married girls from domestic violence there are no legal protections for unmarried girls and women from intimate partner violence.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE CHILD MARRIAGE

A wide variety of interventions are in place around the region to reduce child marriage from which a few key lessons emerge. Empowering girls with information, skills, and support networks is largely considered a promising strategy but a narrow focus on one approach is not enough to bring about the desired results, and the results of such interventions are mixed. Significant programming is focused on the importance of awareness building by educating and mobilizing parents, community members, and men and boys to shift social norms. There is a need for more rigorous evidence on whether these approaches work and acknowledgement that changing norms takes time, requires the community's trust and buy-in, and may require targeted disruption of to-be-determined form. Communications interventions may target some of these stakeholders and are emerging as a promising strategy to change gender norms, attitudes, and behaviours but evaluations of existing communication for development activities are limited.

Programmes focusing on the economic situation and shocks drivers of child marriage have recently received more attention through the evaluation of conditional cash transfer programmes (CCTs). There are few cash programmes that tackle child marriage directly. Rather, they tend to focus on completion of secondary school, predominantly through education stipends, and show mixed results for targeted outcomes. While these interventions could theoretically impact child marriage, there is scant evidence to support this theory. Unintended consequences should be evaluated before proceeding.

## LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Several strategies, action plans and campaigns that explicitly address child marriage are in place at both national and regional levels. There has been a concurrent rise in policies and initiatives that are exclusively focused on youth and adolescents, some of which have elements pertaining to child marriage. Legal and policy coherence is overall low, and enforcement is difficult, calling attention to existing loopholes. Where changes have occurred, some are considered supportive of efforts to reduce child marriage and others work in opposition.

In many cases, poor implementation, lack of coherence in the legal system, too strict enforcement of some laws and too weak enforcement of other laws, and cultural norms all play a role in complicating enactment of laws and policy effectiveness. Measurement of these effects is additionally complicated. Existing laws appear to be inadequate. For instance, even where marital rape of girls under 18 years is now illegal, social factors may make it challenging for young brides to complain. Child marriage laws are being used to break up own-choice relationships; and there are discriminatory laws on inheritance of marital property after divorce in several countries, though some of these are changing. There are also loopholes in annulment laws that result in major obstacles to void marriages as well as wide variation across countries.

Evidence also indicates that insufficient attention is paid to government expenditures related to child marriage. The few resources located on costing of national action plans or state-level schemes indicate that funding child marriage programming and policy enforcement may be considered a low priority, though more information is needed. A closer analysis of aggregate funding levels vis-à-vis income by country is warranted to understand how closely allocated funding reflects a lack of policy coherence or binding constraints.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This review uncovered several areas of research that merit further investigation. They cover a broad swath of questions, but on a meta level, represent an increased understanding of the nuances of addressing such a complicated issue. Child marriage is not, as some practitioners have traditionally stated, a problem of poverty alone, but also a cultural and social institution that is deeply embedded in communities, norms, and cultural and religious frameworks and deserving of a careful view. This section outlines areas for future research.

There is a strong need for research to examine and understand contexts within countries where child marriage persists and is increasing. In order to ensure that any progress made in eradicating child marriage does not stall, it remains important to examine why child marriage continues to increase in some contexts and not in others. Moreover, research should be encouraged to present both national and within country estimates, as well as estimates that take into account marginalized groups, and the role of migration and urbanization. Alongside, the evolution of social norms and agency, particularly which social norms underlying child marriage are changing, why are some not changing and how economic growth and changing social norms are related to each other. Better understanding the perceived disconnect between norms and personal beliefs will further illuminate which levers to pull when designing programming and policy.

Researchers need to examine the drivers, consequences, power dynamics between adolescents and parents, and related linkages of own-choice marriages. There need to be clear distinctions made between love marriages, elopements and cohabitation, and research needs to understand the nature and drivers

## RECOMMENDATIONS

of each separately. At the same time, research needs to unpack ways to provide adolescents with alternate avenues to elopements/marriages. This includes examining how to provide comprehensive sexuality education in contexts where it is taboo in order to reduce adolescent pregnancy as well as changing social norms that penalize pre-marital sexual activity, so that marriage is not seen as a route to engage in sexual relations. It is important to recognize that simply providing agency to adolescents does not mean child marriage is averted.

Access to services and education should be further investigated to be able to make causal claims. Identifying critical points along the educational attainment spectrum, and access to comprehensive sexual education and reproductive services, is key to understanding barriers to reducing child marriage. There is space to investigate under-reporting of live births, lack of contraception access, the domino effect of an unbalanced sex ratio, and expanding work on how to provide comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).

This review uncovered little evidence on the long-term effectiveness of communications interventions and technology changes in reducing child marriage. Communications strategies such as social norms programming should in theory be effective at reducing marriage and have shown positive effects on other outcomes for adolescent girls in the short term. Technological change in the ways that young brides and grooms communicate with each other or connect with services such as informal communication, the role of social media and mobile phones in enhancing communication activities, have yet to be fully explored and their costs and benefits understood.

Legal reviews and reform are needed to understand challenges to a broader legal framework and child protection system that supports ending child marriage alongside deeply held cultural beliefs and assumptions. Annulment

laws, civil registration, and an accounting of budgeting and finance for such initiatives is key to understanding what are the ways in which these loopholes can be addressed and closed.

## PERSISTENT GAPS IN RESEARCH

This review, while not exhaustive, has helped to identify areas where future research might focus. Most noticeably, there is a stark geographic divide in both the quality and quantity of research across countries. This divide is not new but should be remedied. Specifically, there is more existing research on child marriage in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. For Afghanistan and Pakistan, a few studies were identified, but not as many as those on the aforementioned countries. Both data and analysis on Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka are in short supply due in part to the lower levels of child marriage overall. Large and diverse populations in the most studied countries require large investments, but the lack of information on smaller countries should be remedied to be able to address both current child marriage situations and improvements.

Although the issue of child grooms involves a much smaller proportion of child marriages and was identified as a gap in earlier work, it remains an under studied area, and there is an urgent need to examine how boys' experiences differ from those of girls.

National action plans (NAPs) and associated policies have gained prominence as a focus of advocates and international organizations, rising to the level of a key metric for some funders. Despite the increased attention, there is scant evidence that national action plans accelerate change in rates of child marriage. So, while very few resources outlining budget allocations were found, and more research could be used to evaluate how budgets are allocated, there is also a need to better understand the value of national action plans in achieving policy goals.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

Child marriage, despite recent observed declines, continues to be a pressing issue for the international community, affecting broad swaths of the world's population. Globally, more than one third of women aged 20–24 are married or in union before the age of 18, and 1 in 9 before the age of 15 (UNFPA, 2012). Child marriage is most prevalent in South Asia, where one third of girls are married or in union before the age of 18 (30%), and 8 per cent before the age of 15 (UNICEF, 2016). Although child marriage has been declining in South Asia since the 1980s – 63 per cent of girls under 18 in 1985 were married and 32 per cent of girls under 15 – it is still commonly practiced.

The creation of the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage in 2015 was a joint effort by UNICEF and UNFPA to identify priorities and best practices to reduce the practice of child marriage, minimize overlap

in programming, and concentrate global efforts to end the practice. The Global Programme stated a goal of reaching of 2.5 million girls within the first four years and engages in and supports a variety of policy, research, advocacy and programmatic work around the world. In South Asia, this programme operates in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, and conducts regional initiatives. This programme seeks to enhance investments in and support for married and unmarried girls and provide evidence for the corresponding benefits. It engages key actors, including young people, as agents of change in catalyzing shifts towards positive gender norms, increase political support, resources, positive policies and frameworks, and improve the data and evidence base.

The evidence base has indeed been growing. In order to inform the next phase of the Global Programme and to assist in the assessment of the last four years, this paper reviews recent evidence on child marriage in South Asia based on research and studies that have taken place since 2014. The review provides new insights to help country offices make adjustments to current programming. By focusing on recently published work, this review attempts to answer: What does the recent research say collectively about child marriage? Child marriage in this review will include resources from the region focused on both formal marriages and informal unions.

## 2

# OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

A rapid evidence review consisting of online database searches and expert consultation was conducted between February and August 2018. The search aimed to identify material relevant to child marriage and published or disseminated since 2014. Included were scholarly journal articles, policy documentation and white papers from government and non-government agencies, and 'grey' literature such as reports and evaluations by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Special attention was paid to UNICEF and UNFPA led or contracted research, studies, and evaluations. The review should not be considered exhaustive as inclusion criteria mandated a focus on high-quality and well-documented research studies so it is possible that some resources were missed (perhaps from grassroots organizations). Further, the review focuses on recent research and may therefore under-represent issues documented extensively in earlier studies such as dowry as a driver of child marriage. Importantly, this review does not cover humanitarian contexts, an area equally important to examine and that will need a thorough independent review.

Appendix I contains a list of search terms and combinations that were entered into Google Scholar, Google Search, EconLit, ERIC, Scopus, SocInfo and PubMed. Experts at UNICEF ROSA shared recently a compendium of papers including completed country reports on child marriage by UNICEF and UNFPA country and regional offices as well as outside sources. Finally, papers on a few recent studies on quasi-experimental studies of child marriage reduction were added.

## 2.1 STATE OF THE EVIDENCE PRECEDING THIS REVIEW

The discussion in this paper is limited to papers and work produced since 2014 and pertaining to South Asia with the goal of synthesizing recent literature and programming reviews by UNICEF and UNFPA in the region. In 2015, UNICEF ROSA and UNFPA APRO convened an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on ending child marriage, in South Asia. In preparation they conducted a mapping of child marriage programming in South Asia, produced a background paper, and invited the author of a recent paper summarizing the child marriage programming landscape to speak. Here, we briefly discuss the state of the research around child marriage as was established before and during that meeting, relying on the proceedings of the 2015 EGM (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017).

The evidence preceding this meeting focuses on girls and also the associated norms, values, scripts and roles that govern their participation in society and decision-making. In tandem, girl-centered programming was prominently featured, reflecting a focus in programmes mapped in the region and the emphasis on highlighted interventions and policies in Lee-Rife et al. (2012). Another topic of discussion was a randomized control trial (RCT) showing that girls' clubs in Bangladesh could have a strong effect on girls' agency and empowerment, and eventually contribute to the reduction of child marriage. The discussion highlighted the lack of rigorous research and evaluations in some areas of child marriage,

citing the expense and mismatch between the relevant research questions and methods. Also noted was the need for a wider discussion on what types of evidence should be used to determine programming, policy and funding priorities.

Programming around health interventions, access to school and health services, and sexual and reproductive rights and health were identified as key interventions to increase girls' agency and improve outcomes for both married and unmarried girls. An enabling legal environment and changing social and cultural norms that underpin child marriage were also identified as key interventions to reduce child marriage.

Experts at the meeting identified several areas in need of more research. These areas include the prevalence of child grooms and a rapidly changing narrative around how love or choice marriages are treated in the child marriage space. Implications for unintended consequences arising from the reduction of child marriage, such as an increase in the male-female sex ratio at birth in India, was noted as an additional area that merits more attention. Societal conflict and environmental conditions and shocks were identified as potential drivers of child marriages, but there was a need for more evidence.

The appetite for policy change in the region is high, marked by the convening of several inter- and intra-national bodies to discuss, approve, implement, support, and fund national action plans and laws to end child marriage. Inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda reflect this heightened political commitment at the global level.

Moving forward, a key issue raised in the preceding reviews was the lack of evidence around child marriage. In some cases, the need was for more rigorous evaluation as well as the quantification and documentation of other harmful practices, and disaggregated data by gender, geography, and cultural and religious dimensions.

## 2.2 METHODOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND HOW TO PARSE NEW EVIDENCE

Key advances in data collection, aggregation and evaluation have contributed to a greater understanding of the drivers of, and potential to reduce, child marriage. This review identified three primary advances that have changed the global understanding of child marriage. Consistent global indicators, the use of randomized control trials (RCTs) and quasi-experimental methods, and the increased use of rigorous, small-scale qualitative data offer new insights into child marriage. UNICEF and UNFPA have worked to create a suite of indicators to measure progress in the Global Programme. These metrics can be applied consistently across programmes and countries to identify progress at the country level, but also aggregated and used comparatively to understand best practices.

### **Evidence stemming from these sources is still limited and expensive to obtain.**

RCTs may only provide windows into specific contexts or cultural settings, and their external validity is difficult to ascertain without extensive replication. The lack of publicly available data on these RCTs also limits their usefulness, despite the increase in the number of RCTs in the child marriage space.

Quasi-experimental research designs, mixed methods, and other evaluation methods can be used to better understand the potential of programming to reduce child marriage. As such, they are important to understand and include in reviews of research. Evidence highlighted in this review reflects deep qualitative work to illuminate cultural practices as well as broad comparative work exploiting the use of global indicators that are consistent across countries. A growing international consensus on the use of evaluation and data that are designed to answer questions to fit the range of hypotheses and research questions around various interventions, calls for a nuanced examination of different types of evidence.

# 3

## RATES OF CHILD MARRIAGE OVER TIME

In the last 10 years South Asia has experienced a significant decline in child marriage, especially for girls under 15 years. This phenomenon driven predominantly by India where among women aged 20–24 years, those married before age 18 declined from 47.4 per cent in 2005 to 26.7 per cent in 2016 (International Institute for Population Sciences, 2017). In Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, the percentage of women aged 20–49 years who were married before 18 years decreased and there was evidence of an overall decline in rates of child marriage in Bhutan and Maldives – though to different extent across

different contexts. In Bhutan, 26 per cent of girls are married before age 18 (UNICEF, 2016) and the average age at first marriage is 23 years for males and 20 years for females (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2017; Alkire et al., 2016).

A lack of relevant data prevents the identification of a definitive trend in child marriage rates in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. In Afghanistan, a recent UNICEF commissioned report by the Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall find from their qualitative work across five provinces the data was insufficient to suggest child marriage was decreasing, but it was possible to say child marriage was not increasing (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall, 2018). On the other hand, quantitative predictive models that analysed multiple data sets in Afghanistan projected a decrease in child marriage by 2017 (UNICEF, 2016). An update of the preceding study confirmed the decrease, but estimated an even larger magnitude than was projected (UNICEF, 2018, Unpublished). In Sri Lanka, the data is too sparse to be able to draw any conclusions on whether there were any changes in trends of child marriage.

Table 1 provides an overview on the percentage of child marriage for women aged 20–24 years, who were married or in a union by age 15 and by age 18 years.

**TABLE 1** PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 20 TO 24 YEARS WHO WERE FIRST MARRIED OR IN UNION BEFORE AGES 15 AND 18 IN SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES

	By 15 years	By 18 years	Source as per UNICEF database (updated March 2018)
Afghanistan	9	35	ADHS, 2015
Bangladesh	22	59	BDHS, 2014
Bhutan	6	26	MICS, 2010
India	7	27	National Family Health Survey-4, 2015–2016
Maldives	0	4	MDHS, 2009
Nepal	7	40	NDHS, 2016
Pakistan	3	21	PDHS, 2012
Sri Lanka	1	10	Department of Census and Statistics 2016

Source: UNICEF global databases 2018, Sri Lanka Statistics website

**Within country patterns show that child marriage is increasing or remains high for certain groups.** Though the overall national prevalence for child marriage remains low in Maldives, within country estimates highlight that child marriage may be on the rise for certain islands. Between 2015 and 2016, a decrease was noted in child marriage in both Malé (-5%) and Atolls (-5%) but there was a substantial increase in Hulhumalé (+16%) (Ministry of Finance and Treasury, 2017). In India, though overall child marriage is decreasing, there are two geographic areas where there is evidence of persistently high rates of child marriage – in the north-central belt comprising West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Chhattisgarh, and a smaller one comprising southern parts of Andhra Pradesh, south-eastern Maharashtra and northern Karnataka (ICRW and UNICEF India, 2015). Border states also show slightly higher rates of child marriage (Goli, Rammohan and Singh, 2015). In Bangladesh, there is higher median age at first marriage for women 20–49 years in the eastern part of the country. For example, median age at first marriage is 17.6 years in Sylhet, while it is 15.5 years in the western region of Khulna (National Institute of Population Research and Training, Mitra and Associates, and ICF International, 2016).

**Geography tells only part of the story and more research is needed on which populations in these regions are most affected.** One UNICEF India report notes that there is less improvement in child marriage rates among poor and marginalized groups. These include, but are not limited to, ‘closed’ castes and other groups (Jha et al., 2016, p. 45).

Whether or not these trends will continue is a source of debate, and more research could be focused on predicting declines in child marriage rates overall. UNICEF has invested in detailed child marriage projections for each country and showcases country level heterogeneity for a variety of scenarios (UNICEF, 2018). Bangladesh is predicted to continue or even

accelerate its decline, while the authors predict less movement in Pakistan (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018). A more detailed accounting and analysis of the country level variables could contribute to better predictions in this space. Additionally, despite declines in rates of child marriage, rapidly growing populations mean that the absolute number of girls at-risk for child marriage in the region is increasing as the number of adolescents and young people grows (UNFPA, 2014).

### 3.1 GENDER

Traditionally, the literature on child marriage has treated the phenomenon as one that is heavily gendered. Girls are much more likely to be married young than boys (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017) and where boys are married it is often to girls who are much younger than them (Singh and Vennam, 2016; UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017). Child marriage is also inextricably linked to son preference and dowry. That girls are seen as uniquely vulnerable to child marriage reflects strong normative gender roles in the South Asia region, and particularly that girls and women have less agency, voice and decision-making power than men. They are often seen as useful for housework and bearing children, and often are denied inheritance rights as well as access to education. However, circumscribed gender roles affect not just girls, but also boys and men, who are necessarily intimately entwined in a marriage. Lack of economic opportunities for women limits both potential for financial independence and agency to make decisions regarding one’s future. Son preference is manifested in girls being seen as burdensome and less desirable, leading parents to marry off girls early to avoid high dowry payments, the costs of schooling and raising a child, and the psychological burdens of protecting a young girl’s piety as dictated by social norms (UNICEF ROSA, 2018). Broad generalizations about gender severely limit both the research around child marriage and subsequent strategies to combat it.



### 3.2 CHILD GROOMS

Despite ample discussions on the role of boys in child marriage at the 2015 EGM, little progress has been made to integrate questions of gender and boys into child marriage statistics. As such, there is an urgent need to systematically collect data on child grooms. For instance, the UNICEF State of the World’s Children report does not provide data on child grooms and many household surveys, otherwise important sources of child marriage data, do not report age at marriage for men or marital status for boys (see Table 2). In only a few countries do household surveys provide insights into the prevalence of child grooms in the region. The data in Table 2 uses the same sources as in Table 1 in order to make meaningful comparisons. As seen in Table 2, DHS surveys in Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka did not ask any questions on child grooms. Comparing tables 1 and 2, it is apparent that child marriage rates are much lower for boys in the region. For boys less than 19 years, the highest likelihood of being a child groom is in Nepal (Ministry of Health, New ERA and ICF, 2017). The available information on India is slightly different, showing the percentage of young men married by age 21. This figure is higher than in other countries, but even with the longer age range, is almost insignificant when compared to the rate for girls (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017).

Although the lower prevalence of child grooms may explain some gaps in the research, recent evidence indicates child grooms are important to study. Arguably, child grooms face fewer or less severe adverse consequences than child brides, but marriage can still be costly. Boys who are married often stay in their parental homes, are not vulnerable to the health complications of early pregnancy and are (likely) not as at-risk of abuse by in-laws or their partners. Prevailing gender norms also ensure that child grooms have access to domestic and sexual services of their wife. Conversely, boys’ status as minors when they marry does not necessarily shield them from taking on normative adult male responsibilities. However, gender norms may not always serve child grooms in a positive way. In India, pressures to financially provide for one’s wife means that many child grooms have to drop out of school and take on breadwinner roles (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017b). Similarly, in Afghanistan, young boys face pressure to raise money for bride price, to provide for families without the support of female household members, and to create and support families at a young age (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall, 2018). More research is needed to understand how these gender roles shape the institution of child marriage and the experiences and lives of child brides and grooms.

**TABLE 2 PERCENTAGE OF BOYS/MEN AGED 15–29 YEARS WHO WERE MARRIED OR IN UNION AT TIME OF SURVEY IN AFGHANISTAN, NEPAL AND PAKISTAN, AND MARRIED BY 21 YEARS IN INDIA**

	Boys aged 15–19 years	Source
Afghanistan	3	ADHS, 2015
Bangladesh	No data	BDHS, 2014
Bhutan	No data	MICS, 2010
Maldives	No data	MDHS, 2009
Nepal	6	NDHS, 2016
Pakistan	2	PDHS, 2012
Sri Lanka	No data	SLDHS 2006
	Men aged 25–29, married by 21 years	
India	20	National Family Health Survey-4 2015–2016

### 3.3 CONTEXTUAL AND CULTURAL MARRIAGE TYPE

As the practice of child marriage declines, more attention has been focused on the heterogeneity in types of unions. This inquiry into specific cultural practices and evolving norms reflects a desire to understand the various ways in which girls and boys marry. It also uncovers an underlying tension in the way the international community has traditionally viewed child marriage as a violation of human rights. Recent work has documented emerging trends in marriage motivation, such as love and peer marriage, as well as several country specific types of social and cultural practices dictating marriage, such as exchange marriages that require special consideration in designing programming and policy around child marriage. Consanguineous marriage, exchange marriage and other deeply rooted cultural practices are discussed below; love and peer marriages are discussed in the following section.

Two primary examples of country and community specific heterogeneity are consanguineous marriages (i.e., between close relations such as cousins) and exchange marriages where families with boys and girls swap girls, often in lieu of exchanging dowry. At the country level, these practices take different names, and there is some evidence that girls from certain disadvantaged groups are more vulnerable than others. New research shows that in Nepal, *gauna* (or exchange marriage) takes place predominantly in the Terai/Madheshi community and involves marriage as early as 10-12 years for a bride, who then lives in her maternal home until age 15 at which time she is sent to her groom's home after a traditional ceremony. Consanguineous marriage continues to be commonly practiced (Central Department of Population Studies, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2016; Bhatta and Haque, 2015). In Pakistan, *watta satta* (exchange marriages) are widespread and represent a large proportion of child grooms, especially in rural settings such as Ranjanpur, since such marriages do not require dowry (Plan International and Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2014). A recent paper by Sharma et al. (2015)

shows that *watta satta* unions prevail to ensure that neither household loses persons who do housework; exchanging girls maintains girls as a source of cheap labour (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018). There is also evidence of consanguineous marriages in Pakistan, which are more common among 15—24 year old women, rural women, women belonging to low socio-economic status, and husbands and wives who were in the unskilled working category (National Institute of Population Studies and ICF International, 2013). A secondary analysis of the data from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012—2013 brings out the adverse effects of cousin marriages on pregnancy outcomes among women in Pakistan (National Institute of Population Studies and ICF International, 2016). In India, mass child marriages are often performed on auspicious days of *Akshaya Tritiya* and *Mahashivrathiri*. As the number of auspicious days in the calendar rises, more girls may become at-risk for such marriages (Jha et al., 2016). In Afghanistan two practices persist, despite being outlawed – *baad* whereby girls are given as a wife and/or servant as part of a settlement or compensation or peacemaking for a family member's crimes, and *badal*, where girls are exchanged between families (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall, 2018).

### 3.4 LOVE MARRIAGES AND ELOPEMENTS

In almost all countries in the region, there is evidence that love marriages, elopements and/or co-habitation are on the rise. Most household survey data do not distinguish between these types of marriage, so we rely on qualitative analysis to identify trends. Cohabitation may be a precursor to marriage but does not involve a formal union. Love marriages are distinguished from elopements by the chronology of parental approval. In love marriages, parents give their approval after adolescents choose their spouse but before the formal union, while elopements often take place between adolescents who marry in spite of their parents' disapproval, sometimes running away from home, but with the possibility of approval following the formal

union. This distinction is important as evidence from Bangladesh and Nepal indicates that elopements are more likely to be child marriages, while love marriages are less likely to be child marriages (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017; Ghimire and Samuels, 2014). More research is needed to understand this distinction and the motivations in other countries to design programming reflecting these realities. For example, in Afghanistan, India, Maldives and Nepal, inter-caste or inter-ethnicity marriages are often a reason for elopements (Adlparvar, 2014; Allendorf and Pandian, 2016; Central Department of Population Studies, 2017), which have some additional drivers (e.g., caste/ethnic norms and customs) that would require more contextual strategies.

Bangladesh, India and Nepal have experienced an increase in love marriages and elopements especially in urban areas, although arranged marriages continue to be more likely at the country level, particularly in Bangladesh and India (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016; Ainul and Amin, 2015). There is considerable variation within countries and lack of consistent statistics makes it difficult to document changes. In Nepal, for instance one study showed 25 per cent of marriages across 15 districts in 2012 were own-choice (Plan Nepal, 2012) and another study showed that 35 per cent across 5 districts were own-choice marriages in 2017 (Central Department of Population Studies, 2017). Rolpa and Rautahat districts have higher prevalence than other areas with 80 per cent and 95 per cent, respectively, of young people citing love as the reason for marriage (Central Department of Population Studies, 2017). Urban areas are more likely to have seen a rise in love marriages. This is particularly true in Bangladesh where love marriages are becoming more commonplace, especially in urban areas (Amin et al., 2016; Plan International and Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2014), but the broader practice of arranged marriage is still seen as the norm (Ainul and Amin, 2015). In India, there is more detailed information on the structures of these marriages. In urban India, there is a modest increase in the length of time women know their spouse

before marriage (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016), increasing interpersonal compatibility (Kaur and Palriwala, 2014), and an overall decline in parental control, particularly in the northern and central regions (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016).

Conversely, in Pakistan, love marriages are highly stigmatized and unacceptable, as evidenced by the more than one third out of 1,181 participants who agreed that going against parent's wishes for marriage was a justifiable reason for physical violence against girls (Plan International and Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2014). However, in Bangladesh, Franco finds that while overall, elopements and premarital relationships are stigmatized and viewed negatively in rural communities, there are some slow changing trends (Franco, 2014). In his work, Franco provides examples of a few women who publicly demand in *bichars* (informal village courts) that their choice of spouse be granted to them (2014).

Changing marriage practices are different by tribal and cultural affiliation as well. In Afghanistan, there are marked differences between tribes on child consent. Though distinct from love marriages in that the union is still initiated by parents, the practice highlights heterogeneity in child marriage that is important to understand for programming. For example, parents in the Hazara and Tajik tribes are more likely to seek the consent of their children when arranging for their children's marriages in comparison to the Pashton ethnic group (Hadi, 2016).

**Intersecting trends in marriage types are garnering more attention in the literature and deserve further investigation.** In both India and Nepal, marriages in which women chose husbands by themselves are more likely to be consanguineous than marriages in which parents alone selected the husband (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016; Ghimire and Samuels, 2014). Such a combination of consanguineous and own choice marriages is on the decline in India but on the rise in Nepal (Ghimire and Samuels, 2014). In other countries, such as Maldives, arranged marriages were traditionally uncommon (Fulu

and Miedema, 2016) but are now on the rise due to an increasingly conservative form of Islam that is influencing the roles and responsibilities of women in both home and public spaces (El-Horr and Pande, 2016). Love marriages and/or elopements do continue to be common in Maldives, though often stigmatized as social climbing, where girls who choose inter-ethnic marriages are seen as doing it to “move up” in social hierarchy or class (Kulikov, 2014).

Despite some positive changes in adolescent decision-making, gender norms that justify social policing and stigmatization of romantic relationships underlie elopements and co-habitation. In these situations, child marriage is associated with (if not causally attributed to) a lack of agency or freedom in other spaces, such as dating or movement from the home. Elopements in Nepal (Ghimire and Samuels, 2014) and co-habitation in Sri Lanka (Goonesekere and Amarasuriya, 2013) often provoke reactions by families or the couple themselves to maintain the girl’s honour, leading couples in relationships to formalize their relationships through marriage. Similarly, in India, a rise in elopements in Ladakh is attributed to strong social norms against dating, particularly salient for Buddhists, the elite, and those pursuing education (Aengst, 2014). In Sri Lanka, both the community and service providers view cohabitation as equivalent to being married (Emmanuel, et al., 2015; Goonesekere and Amarasuriya, 2013).

Further, these practices may result in harsh punishments for ‘offenders’ of social norms or relevant laws and customs. In Sri Lanka, for example, those who engage in activities that may precede elopement, including premarital sex or running away from home, are often prosecuted for having committed “moral crimes” (Human Rights Watch, 2012; *The Independent*, 2017). In Afghanistan, elopements often occur between couples of different ethnicities and sometimes result in strong penalties for families of both the bride and groom. Qualitative interviews and observations in Afghanistan’s Bamyan valley with the Saadat and Hazarah community found

that elopements were associated with various consequences, for instance where the girl’s family assumes that she has been kidnapped often the result is that the boy’s father is jailed. In other cases, normative hierarchical differences between ethnicities may cause further tensions which in some cases led to fatal injuries to the girl and boy (Adlparvar, 2014). In India, new research documents stories of punishment via violence against those who choose inter-faith relationships (*Indian Express*, 2018) or choose to elope (Henderson, 2015). Child marriage laws may also be used to break up inter-caste marriages.

There is mixed evidence as to whether increasing access to technology is linked to the rise in love marriages/elopements. Qualitative work in Afghanistan shows that increasing access to schools, universities and new technologies means groups that traditionally did not meet, now have more opportunities to interact (Adlparvar, 2014). In Nepal, on the other hand, (Ghimire and Samuels, 2014) find in their qualitative work that elopements are associated with access to and use of mobile phones, but more causally related to lack of mentorship by adults and hence the inability to manage changing adolescent relationships. However, this association requires more analysis given the substantial increase in media consumption among Nepali girls, from 17 per cent in 2011 to 24 per cent in 2014 (UNICEF Nepal, 2016) and studies have not explicitly examined media use and own-choice marriages in Nepal.

### 3.5 DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

Research on divorce and separation are often segregated from research on child marriage, perhaps because of norms around divorce and separation in the region and because divorce or separation is more likely to take place once adolescents become young adults. There is limited research on divorce practices among those who marry early. In Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, evidence that child marriage could lead to divorce is cited as one reason to oppose the practice (Plan International and Coram Children’s Legal Centre, 2014).

## 4

## DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE

Several new studies note that while drivers of child marriage are largely known and common, their relative importance and how they function varies from one place to another (Jha et al., 2016). In this section, the review describes the nuances that have emerged in three drivers in child marriage research that are most commonly promoted and focused upon: economic vulnerabilities, education and social norms.

### 4.1 ECONOMIC SITUATION

A large portion of the research on child marriage has rested on data analysis showing that girls in lower wealth and income quintiles were most at risk for child marriage. This data undergirded many assumptions about child marriage in relation to the prevalence of gender norms in lower-income families and communities as well as economics in the costs of raising girls. The lack of opportunities for girls to earn money in formal employment in many societies where child marriage is present and the traditions of girls living with their in-laws reinforced the view that girls were married off in order for parents to avoid investing in them since they would not yield high returns. Although these patterns remain relevant, more recent attention has been paid to girls of all socioeconomic statuses, which shows that the relationship between poverty and child marriage is not so straightforward. Girls in poor socioeconomic

contexts are at-risk for child marriage for the reasons listed above and others, but girls and women from middle- to high-income brackets also experience child marriage. Indeed, when girls from various socioeconomic statuses are viewed together, several studies show a complex relationship between wealth and child marriage.

Even when viewing a single country, studies come to differing conclusions on the role of wealth in determining risk of child marriage and suggests that structural and normative factors may be more influential. In Nepal, one study shows that wealthy households, households with higher educated members, and households with a larger share of working members are less likely to have underage married household members (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018). Another study shows that in Nepal, girls from the richest households are likely to get married early (Amin et al., 2014) and another study finds that there is no difference between rates of child marriage girls in the four lowest wealth quintiles (UNICEF Nepal, 2016). Yet another study in Nepal finds no impact of wealth on child marriage (Central Department of Population Studies, 2017), suggesting that wealth and child marriage may be, in fact, influenced by other structural factors. In Pakistan, some studies indicate that wealth is negatively related to child marriage while other studies find no relationship. Women who married into households in the bottom four quintiles of wealth are more likely to marry than women who married into households in the top quintile (Male and Wodon, 2016a). While the PDHS did not measure level of wealth of their household of origin, the authors note that it is likely that women marry men who have similar socioeconomic profiles as them (Male and Wodon, 2016a). On the other hand, another study finds that women belonging to the poorest quintile of wealth index were more likely to be married as children but this relationship disappears when social equity indicators and national region of residence are included in the analysis (Nasrullah, Zakar and Zakar, 2014).

Although there is inconsistent evidence that levels of wealth determine child marriage rates, perceptions of an unstable economic future are predictive of whether girls marry. This phenomenon may be related to gender norms as economic opportunities for girls and young women are limited outside the home in many contexts, and may contribute to perceived economic uncertainty (UNICEF ROSA, 2018). In Afghanistan, female household members under 23 years cited economic pressures as the main reason for marriage despite no correlation between actual levels of income and debt and prevalence of child marriage (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall, 2018). The authors suggest that it is the perceptions of an insecure financial future or lack of employment opportunities that may be the driver of child marriage. In the context of economic vulnerabilities, it is not surprising that truncated livelihood opportunities are linked to anxieties around what the future will hold for girls (and boys), increasing the likelihood of child marriage as a coping mechanism. Indeed, in Bangladesh and Pakistan (Plan International and Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2014), India (Ferreira and Kamal, 2017; Dornan and Pells, 2015), and in Nepal (Amin et. al., 2014), female respondents are aware that their access to economic opportunities is limited, which may be underlying a need to marry early and secure some future prospects. Intergenerational effects here may be strong as well. In Pakistan, women who were married as children are most likely to work with earnings in cash or in kind, and with unpaid work (Male and Wodon, 2016a; Plan International and Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2014). These jobs are by nature more likely to be unstable, contributing to the perception of economic insecurity.

Where jobs do appear to be more open to women, girls are more likely to stay in school, and perhaps relatedly, delay marriage. In Bangladesh, simply knowing that literacy and numeracy skills are needed for girls to access nearby garment factory jobs is linked to a 50 per cent higher increase in the educational

attainment of younger girls (aged 12–15 years) than in villages that do not have access to garment factory jobs (Heath and Mobarak, 2015).

**The intersection of child labour and child marriage has seen some additional research but needs more clarification.** In India, a study of children who provide additional household income by engaging in some form of work may be – counter intuitively – protected against child marriage given that families will be less willing to marry off someone bringing an income into the home (ICRW and UNICEF India, 2015). Engaging in work leaves them less likely to be educated, but also less likely to be married. This finding is not consistent across the region, however, and should be further explored. In particular, more research is needed to gain a greater understanding of the substitutability of child marriage and child labour. If girls are put to work instead of married off, the overall effect on their wellbeing is unclear, especially as labour laws and standards are lacking in places where uneducated girls are most likely to find work. In Pakistan, however, contrary to the study cited above, secondary analysis of the PDHS 2012 data finds that child marriage measures are lower for women who are not employed (Male and Wodon, 2016a).

#### **Economic activity at national level**

Over and above household poverty, regional and national economic activity does appear to be predictive of child marriage rates. In India, an analysis of the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) 2012 and the Economic Survey of India 2012 finds that the prevalence of child marriage is negatively associated with per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) (Goli, Rammohan and Singh, 2015). Although the study cannot definitively say that an increase in per capita NSDP would reduce child marriage rates, the overwhelming decline in child marriage over time in the region suggests that national level economics may be contributing. Bolstering this view, an analysis of 14 DHS datasets between 1994 and 2014 from Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan find that regional growth in economic activity was linked to lower risk of child marriage,

after controlling for several household factors (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018). This relationship is particularly strong for marriages of girls under 15 years of age. Indeed, Lemmon (2014) is cited in the UNICEF/ UNFPA report to show that other country-level studies have also indicated that low GDP per capita is linked to high prevalence of child marriage (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018, p.11).

Economic growth can decrease child marriage in areas where the normative support for the practice is low or declining, but likely has less effect in areas where the norm holds strong. Evidence shows that economic growth by itself is not sufficient to reduce child marriage rates; norms and traditions likely interact with economic circumstances to affect the practice. In an analysis of multiple datasets (both DHS data and annual satellite night-time light data) the authors show that in Pakistan, where child marriage is less prevalent than in Bangladesh and Nepal, increased economic activity was associated with a decrease in the phenomenon (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018). In Bangladesh and Nepal, increased economic activity only had a “modest impact on reducing child marriage” (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018, p. viii). Similarly, in India, Jha et al., cite ICRW and UNICEF’s DLHS -3 data analysis and explain that while child marriage is generally associated with higher levels of poverty, this is not the case in some areas where child marriage is falling, richer households appear to hold onto the practice more strongly than poorer households in situations where it is no longer widespread (Jha et al, 2016, p.17-18).

## 4.2 SHOCKS AND MIGRATION

Although child marriage is often associated with poverty, shocks to income such as drought (negative shock) or bumper crops (positive shock) may have profound and differentiated effects on the age of marriage depending on cultural norms and practices (Corno et al., 2016; Alston et al., 2017). In a quasi-experimental study, drought in India reduces the likelihood that a girl will be

married young. This effect could be related to the direction of marriage payments given that the opposite effects are observed in places where bride price is common. More work is needed to understand subnational patterns in these effects.

The evidence around how a shock such as migration affects the propensity of child marriage is mixed. Some studies find that migration had no impact on prevalence of child marriage for boys and girls, while others show that migration may increase likelihood of marriage, particularly in the planning stages, highlighting the importance of existing practices and gender norms. In Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, the number of household members who have migrated from rural to urban areas or vice versa had no association with child marriage for underage members at home (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018). In India, urbanization is associated with lower rates of child marriage, although the authors do not see this link as causal and caution that migration to urban areas is not a panacea (Jha, et al., 2016). Conversely, qualitative work reveals that with migration comes uncertainties about the future and child marriage may offer security, safety and potential to strengthen social networks (Sharma, et al., 2015). In Bangladesh, the rate of child marriage among those planning to migrate increases as younger girls are perceived to be more malleable from a groom’s perspective (Population Council, 2017), and to protect a girl’s honour and status in the society (Sharma, et al., 2015). On the other hand, migration is also linked positively to girls’ and women’s empowerment, a greater value for education, and subsequent delayed child marriage (Islam, Haque and Hossain, 2016). Thus, there is no clear relationship between migration and child marriage in the region. Forced migration due to Afghanistan’s recent drought is showing clear signs of negatively affecting women and girls. Children displaced due to the drought are more likely to be out of school and are reported to be experiencing higher rates of negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage (UNICEF Afghanistan, 2018).

### 4.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL ASSOCIATED WITH MARRIAGE

As programmes increasingly seek to empower girls and educate gatekeepers, more attention is needed on what incentives drive child marriage from a societal or social level. Recent research highlighting exchange practices (described above in the trends section), offers some clues as to how child marriage might be seen as a way to increase social capital and maintain important kinship networks (UNICEF ROSA, 2018). The interdependence of these child marriage practices highlights gaps in our knowledge around perceptions of child marriage at the family unit level. Social capital associated with the joining of families is shown to be an important determinant of child marriage rates, but also merits further investigation.

The norm of compulsory marriage is also strong and likely affects rates of early marriage. Research on attitudes, such as a sample of over 10,000 participants in Bangladesh, shows more than 69 per cent believe women earn their identity and social status through marriage, emphasizing the need for further investigation of the status angle (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017).

### 4.4 EDUCATION

Research has consistently shown that education and child marriage are linked and mutually reinforcing, but very little of this work makes causal claims (Lee-Rife et al., 2012; Streatfield et al., 2015; UNFPA, 2012). When examining issues of the relationship between marriage and education, articulating the direction of the effect is important to identifying the relevant policy question. For instance, if we are to focus on the causal effect of child marriage on educational attainment, this reinforces the idea that there are negative consequences associated with child marriage, but does not offer alternatives to marriage for affected youth (UNICEF ROSA, 2019). Below, we highlight main findings from the recent literature on education, focusing on the policy question of how to reduce child marriage incidence.

Educational attainment is rising in much of the world but is not closely linked to child marriage rates in some key countries in the region. In Bangladesh, a study of over 200,000 households finds that most girls aged 12–14 years who were married in the year before the survey had at least some level of education (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018). In both Afghanistan and Pakistan, where overall educational attainment is low, the relationship between educational attainment and child marriage is not straightforward given that unmarried girls are also out of school and women aged 20–24 years received little education, irrespective of their age of marriage (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall, 2018; UNICEF ROSA, 2019). At the country level, in Bangladesh, one study finds that while more girls are likely to have some level of education, more women aged 20–24 years are also more likely to be married, distinct from Pakistan where the majority of girls do not attend school and there is a lower prevalence of women 20–24 years who married before the age of 18 (UNICEF ROSA, 2019).

As the international community turns its education lens to topics such as quality of education and outcomes of increased educational attainment such as literacy and employment, the links between education and child marriage appear more tenuous, but still deserving of attention. In India, ICRW and UNICEF India, using Census 2011 data, show that districts with more rapidly rising female literacy rates and a narrow gender gap in literacy rates have seen a decline in female child marriage (ICRW and UNICEF India, 2015). Importantly, rates of female literacy at the district level are also inversely associated with child marriage (IHDS, 2012).

Completion of secondary school appears to be a critical intervention point to prevent child marriage although there is still significant heterogeneity across the region. Globally, with each year of secondary education, the likelihood of marrying as a child or having a first child before the age of 18 reduces by average 6



percentage points across 15 countries (including Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan) (Wodon et al., 2017). In India one study shows that districts with fewer villages with middle schools have significantly higher prevalence of child marriage (ICRW and UNICEF India, 2015). In a study of 755 out-of-school girls from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, the dropout rate is highest just before completion of primary school or just before completion of secondary school (Ferreira and Kamal, 2017). In Nepal, first generation school attendees appear to be most vulnerable to child marriage at the point when they drop out of school (Amin et al., 2014). Among girls with primary education, 8 per cent are married by 18 years, among those with secondary education 13 per cent are married by 18 years, but among those with more than secondary education, only 6 per cent are married by 18 years (Central Department of Population Studies, 2017). Norms around age and other effects may interact here and suggest that educational attainment alone is not sufficient to protect against child marriage.

**Dropout rates vary widely across regions and within countries but are not necessarily linked to child marriage.** One study uses MICS data to hypothesize on the existence of a “tipping point” at which the risk of dropout and child marriage for girls is highest. In Bangladesh and India, analysis of MICS 2014 data shows the highest dropout rate happens in Grade 5 but is at grades 7 and 8 in Nepal (Sekine and Hodgkin, 2017). The same authors show that while child marriage is present in all education quintiles, married girls are 10 times more likely to drop out than unmarried girls. Despite this finding, there is no clear line of causality established by the study. Programmes that seek to reduce child marriage through education or interventions at school should be cognizant of dropout spikes and how they relate to child marriage but note that preventing dropout may not prevent child marriage and vice versa. Programmes targeting girls in secondary school are likely to have a stronger impact in contexts where girls are more likely to go onto secondary school anyway

(UNICEF ROSA, 2019). In contexts where primary school dropout is high, programming might find a more efficacious focus at that level in order to reach more at-risk girls.

At the household level, studies highlight that education of head of household (HH) is an important factor to consider in examining rates of child marriage. In Afghanistan (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall, 2018), Bangladesh (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018), Pakistan (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018), Nepal (UNICEF Nepal, 2016; UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018), and in India (Young Lives, 2016), education level of head of household (HH) is consistently inversely related to child marriage. Education of the head of household is important in predicting attitudes. In Bangladesh, whereas only 24 per cent of 200,000 households consider a child to be someone under the age of 18, as the educational achievement of the household head and his/her spouse increases, so too does the perception that under 18 equates to childhood (to 36%) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018).

Aspirations and parental perception of the value of education have a strong influence on the links between education and child marriage. Girls who come from homes that have strong positive educational aspirations are more protected from child marriage (Young Lives, 2016). Dropout, which may lead to child marriage, is also linked to a lack of family support (Tackling Child Marriage and Early Childbearing in India: Lessons from Young Lives, 2016). In India and Bangladesh (Ferreira and Kamal, 2017) and in Nepal (Chan, 2015), lack of family support is the second highest reason for dropout from school. Parents in Nepal defend their girls dropping out for reasons such as belief that school quality is subpar, that school WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) facilities are inadequate. They may also proscribe to strict gender norms such as the belief that girls do not need an education because they get married and move to another family and the expectation that girls will be involved in household work (Chan, 2015).

Girls' own values placed on education may also predict dropout for younger girls and merits further study. In Nepal, a UNICEF study shows that the most common reason girls reported for dropout was that they didn't like to study (30.8% of the sample) while women aged 20–24 years cited getting married as the reason for drop-out (UNICEF Nepal, 2016). More research is needed to determine how these values in conjunction with social norms and parental pressure actually affect dropout rates, especially in contexts where girls exert low decision-making power. In Bangladesh, older girls more often cite marriage as the reason for dropout (Community Assessments: Accelerating action to end child marriage in Bangladesh, 2017).

Aspiration alone, in the absence of opportunity and presence of stifling norms, may have little effect on rates of child marriage. In Afghanistan, Human Rights Watch finds that despite restrictive norms, girls across Balkh, Kabul, Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces showed strong aspirations for education (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Aspirations are often a function of being exposed to possible opportunities for the future. When there are pessimistic perceptions of future returns, then the effect of aspirations on the empowerment of girls is lower as seen in studies on Bangladesh (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017), Pakistan (Plan International and Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2014), India (Ferreira and Kamal, 2017; Dornan and Pells, 2015), Maldives (El-Horr and Pande, 2016), and Nepal (Amin et al., 2014). In Afghanistan, among parents, the perception of limited future returns from education is cited as a strong reason underlying child marriage (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall, 2018). In Maldives, several factors contribute to a dim view of future employment prospects: a) there are few white-collar jobs that match youth aspirations (El-Horr and Pande, 2016), b) youth are dealing with several changes including gendered shifts in family structure (less egalitarian gender roles at home for instance), conservative religious values, and an education and training system that is leaving

them ill-prepared for the new economy (World Bank, 2014), and c) women are unable to find jobs easily. The latest Maldives Census finds that 35 per cent of women are unable to find a job because of lack of job opportunities and 13 per cent because of responsibilities at home (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

## 4.5 EVOLVING SOCIAL NORMS

The role of social norms and gender norms as a significant driver of child marriage has been discussed in detail in the literature, and in recent years has gained even more traction. 'Norms' – defined as agreed-upon expectations or rules that govern behaviour – is often used as shorthand for a variety of phenomena governing behaviour through expectations or beliefs and social incentives. These include, but are not limited to social norms (perceptions of what is common or dictated in a specific community), gender and gender-discriminatory norms (norms rooted in patriarchal values and ideologies that place a high value on female virginity or purity), cultural or traditional norms (such as the tradition of dowry), and an emphasis on kinship networks (Lee-Rife et al. 2012; Svanemyr et al. 2015; UNICEF ROSA, 2018). One study notes that the importance of social norms as a root driver for child marriage cannot be ignored (Jha et al., 2016).

A consistent takeaway from this review is that, across many countries, social norms and gender norms are not changing much or quickly. Patriarchal views on puberty dominating readiness for marriage is one that remains particularly persistent and unchanging, or "sticky." Marriage remains the default next step for girls and is essentially compulsory in all eight countries. Post-marriage, rigid gender norms define roles and expectations for both boys and girls. Norms underlying transition to adulthood remain much the same as research has shown before, with no clear consensus on when people think childhood ends. In many countries, such as Afghanistan, marriage remains one of the most prominent markers of transition

to adulthood (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall, 2018). In Bangladesh, the capacity to understand more (*bhujā*) marks adulthood (Franco, 2014) while in Maldives, transition to adulthood is defined by living independently (Demmke, 2017). In countries where recent data is available, transition to adulthood continues to be determined by physical maturation more than chronological age, such as in Bangladesh (UNFPA Bangladesh, 2018; Population Council, 2017) and India (Young Lives, 2016). In Nepal, markers of transition for girls include menstruation (Panthi, 2017).

Unchanging and hard to change gender norms, or norms that remain 'sticky', include restriction on the mobility and voice of girls as they become older, devaluing their worth, linking their status to marriage, and promoting patriarchal views on 'chastity' and 'honour'. In Bangladesh, gender norms underlying child marriage (e.g., tying the status of girls to becoming a wife, social shaming of unmarried girls, sexual purity of younger girls, and parental responsibility of marrying girls) were seen to prevail equally across all socio-economic groups (UNFPA Bangladesh, 2018). In a sample of over 10,000 participants in Bangladesh, more than 69 per cent agreed that girls are born to be homemakers and they earn their identity and social status through marriage (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017). In another study in Bangladesh, family honor, interlinked with the expectations of what women and girls 'should be' and how they 'should behave', is cited by 24 per cent of families whose girls got married before 18 years in the past year (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018). Security and safety of girls is also driving marriage, particularly for girls who are already attending school. In India, a UNICEF report finds that the strongest factor underlying child marriage in Andhra Pradesh, Gujrat, Rajasthan and West Bengal was restrictive gender norms—girls have no voice or control over their own lives, girls are seen as *parayadhan* (someone else's property), and the expectation to protect girls' honour and chastity by male members in their lives (UNICEF India, 2014).

Social norms underlying dowry and child marriage remain much the same, with climate-related vulnerabilities often exacerbating dowry costs. Strategies to avoid paying dowry include encouraging adolescents into own-choice marriages or arranging exchange marriages for them. Dowry remains a commonly accepted practice in several countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka). In Bangladesh, there is some evidence that dowry demands were low in the Southwestern area (Amin et al., 2016), but other studies argue that in Bangladesh, economic crises created by climate challenges are leading to an increase in child and forced marriages because the dowry is cheaper than before (Alston et al., 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2015). In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, as a result of displacement due to tsunami and conflict, and housing policies, expectations around dowry have changed for grooms within the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities (Jayatilaka and Amirthalingam, 2015). Changing expectations include grooms (and their family) requesting a house, jewelry, furniture, clothing and other forms of property – demands that have been accepted by the brides' families (Jayatilaka and Amirthalingam, 2015). In Nepal, girls from the wealthiest homes hold the most gender equitable attitudes compared to their peers but are also the most vulnerable to high dowry demands (Central Department of Population Studies, 2017). There is also evidence that parents in Nepal may be encouraging adolescents towards own-choice marriages to avoid costs related to dowry (UNICEF and Girls Not Brides, 2015). Moreover, young age continues to be associated with lower dowry while education is associated with a larger dowry (Plan International and Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2014), and in India and Nepal, dowry is exacerbated as a result of both class and caste inequalities (Sharma, et al., 2015). In Pakistan, marriages like *watta satta* are also ways to avoid paying dowry (Plan International and Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2014).

The persistence of cultural attitudes and practices that are harmful to women may be partially explained by the strong incentives

exerted by social norms, or perceptions of correct behaviour in this case, over and above those prescribed by personal belief or knowledge of the costs (Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans, 2014). This is evident in Afghanistan and Bangladesh, where respondents showed that having knowledge about the negative effects of child marriage is not equated with lower rates, particularly when customary laws and cultural consensus are important drivers (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel

Hall, 2018; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018; Raj, Gomez and Silverman, 2014). Similarly, in Nepal and Bangladesh, studies show that despite having awareness of the risks of child marriage and the benefits of delaying marriage, many continue the practice because the perceived benefits of child marriage are seen to outweigh the perceived risks (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018; Karim, Greene and Picard, 2016).

### BOX 1 A BICYCLE DISTRIBUTION SCHEME IN INDIA INCREASING GIRLS' ENROLMENT IN SCHOOLS

Several states in India have adopted a bicycle distribution scheme that provides free bicycles for a safe and affordable commute to secondary schools usually situated some distance from villages. These state-run schemes are found in Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Bihar, Gujrat to name a few. Jha et al., reviewed multiple evaluations of these schemes in different states and found conflicting results. In Bihar the scheme was largely successful, increasing girls' age-appropriate enrolment in secondary school by 30 per cent and reducing the gender gap in age-appropriate secondary school enrolment by 40 per cent. But it was less effective in Gujrat. An analysis of the programme design indicated that in Bihar, the scheme was applicable to all girls enrolled in Class 9 while in Gujrat, the scheme was limited to girls categorized as living below the poverty line. These conflicting results reveal that in contexts where girls are already enrolled in secondary school (i.e., gender norms are changing or have changed), incentives are likely to have a greater impact than in contexts where girls in very poor families are unlikely to attend school at all.

Source: Jha, J., P. Minni, S. T. Priya and D. Chatterjee, *Reducing Child Marriage in India: A model to scale up results, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies and United Nations Children's Fund, New Delhi, 2016.*

**Recognizing where norms are changing is important.** UNFPA finds in Bangladesh that in contexts where cultural beliefs are already in transition, there is a decline in child marriage (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017) and UNICEF's study in Bangladesh finds that where social norms around child marriage are strong, and it is a common practice, changes are slow (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018). So too the impact of programming can be dependent on how strongly communities hold onto norms (see Box 1). This suggests that the most amenable way to change child marriage is when norms are in flux.

Birth order itself matters in the context of social norms that dictate older siblings marry before younger siblings. In India, girls with older sisters and without older brothers are less likely to be married before 18, but girls with an older brother, who is working and contributing to the family income, tend to get married earlier (Young Lives, 2016). One possible explanation is that when there are two girls in the household, the older sister's marriage takes priority and, in some way, *protects* the younger daughter from marriage. On the other hand, in households with both a boy and girl, gender differentiation between the children will be strongest, as shown in child development research (Perez-Brena et al., 2015), whereby daughters are highly at risk for child marriage owing to social pressures as well as a family's heightened ability to pay a dowry.

## 4.6 EVOLVING AGENCY

The ability of girls, or lack thereof, to make decisions for themselves is an important focus of child marriage programming that is inextricably linked to other drivers. While many norms are unchanging, perceptions of girls' agency do appear to be evolving and has implications for child marriage. As mentioned in the above sections, norms underlying own choice marriages are undergoing change throughout the region. In Bangladesh, three out of four respondents (out of more than 200,000 households) agreed that girls should have consent while arranging their marriage were 30 percentage points less likely to experience a child marriage in the past year (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018). In addition to adolescent empowerment in decision-making, as seen in the section on education, there are changes in educational aspirations for girls as well as increase in labour force participation.

Girl-focused programming has often made girls' agency a key element, working with gatekeepers to allow girls the right to refuse child marriage, working with girls themselves in girls' clubs to enhance their willingness to speak up and advocate for themselves. Some of these programmes have shown promise, such as the BALIKA programme in Bangladesh and Apni Beti Apna Dhan in India.

Partly in response to these conversations, more research has been focused on the reasoning behind limited girls' agency. In Nepal, the onset of menstruation is linked to restrictions on

activities and mobility especially in mid and far Western regions where *chaupadi* is still practiced (Panthi, 2017). Girls from advantaged indigenous and upper-caste castes, followed by Dalit castes, remain more vulnerable to follow *chaupadi* practices (Panthi, 2017). Given these strong and unchanging norms, it is not surprising that in Sri Lanka, in addition to physical changes, adolescent girls report that cautions and restrictions from mothers about regulating one's behaviour provides an indication for girls that puberty has arrived (Emmanuel et al., 2015).

### Family structure and women's overall agency

Alongside poverty and wealth, family structure and female agency give some clues as to the drivers of marriage. The UNICEF/UNFPA report on drivers of child marriage indicates that the relationship between wealth/poverty and child marriage is influenced by a variety of other factors in addition to poverty/wealth indicators – what they call 'drivers' at the 'micro' level (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018). In Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, where women are named the heads of household, there are significantly fewer child marriages than households with male heads of household. They also find that women's decision-making power and indicators of women's empowerment (such as attitudes towards domestic violence, actual experience of domestic violence, women's decision-making power over household earnings and use of contraceptives) are related to lower rates of child marriage. More work is needed to understand these mechanisms as women may choose investment in children allocations differently when they are the sole decision-makers.

# 5

## LINKAGES BETWEEN CHILD MARRIAGE AND OTHER SECTORS

### 5.1 CHILD MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Fertility, an issue that is linked to sexual rights and reproductive health and knowledge, has been declining in all countries in South Asia since 2004 (Akseer et al., 2017). Fertility remains an important health issue for women and girls, as early fertility is strongly associated with child marriage and early maternal mortality. With the recent fall in child marriage rates, an investigation into the link between fertility and child marriage is warranted, but a report by UNICEF and UNFPA cautions that the “issue of endogeneity in measuring the association between child marriage and fertility rates as studies often discuss the two sides of this correlation interchangeably” (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018, p. 9). Indeed, while regional estimates indicate a decrease in overall fertility, group level estimates reveal heterogeneity and risk of high fertility for already marginalized groups.

South Asia has seen a regional decline in fertility rates, but marital and adolescent fertility rates remain high. Marital fertility is high in the region, particularly in Afghanistan (Fernandez, Wong and Tia, 2017), India (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011), and Pakistan (Male and Wodon, 2016b). The 2017 World Population Prospects report notes that Afghanistan is one of 22 countries with the highest levels of fertility (UNDESA, 2017) and the Socio Demographic and Economic Survey (SDES) 2011–2014, finds marital fertility is high

for currently married women (Fernandez, Wong, & Tia, 2017). In Bhutan, even though adolescent fertility rates (AFR) declined by almost 50 per cent between 2004 and 2014, they remain higher than other countries in the region like India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Dorji, 2015). Even in Maldives where the adolescent birth rate remains low (2.1%) (Demmke, 2017), the Gender Inequality Index (GII) finds that the Reproductive Health Index score is particularly low for the southern atolls except in Addu (Ministry of Finance and Treasury and UNDP, 2014).

Additionally, under-reporting of live births is a lingering issue. In certain regions of Afghanistan, from 2005 to 2010, there was under-reporting by 50 per cent (Fernandez, Wong and Tia, 2017).

**High marital fertility suggests that childbearing begins immediately after marriage, irrespective of age.** Studies show that women who enter marriage start childbearing right away (Fernandez, Wong and Tia, 2017) – cultural and social norms may inform these decisions, but they also suggest a need for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) knowledge. In India where data from the 2011 Indian Census show that around 30 per cent of females aged 15–19 years who are ever married are already mothers and 10 per cent have had at least two children (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011). In Afghanistan, women of all ages have a high probability of a live birth (Fernandez, Wong and Tia, 2017). In Afghanistan’s urban centres,

such as Kabul, only one third of women use modern contraceptives (UNFPA, 2012), and on average women have more than five children (Fernandez, Wong and Tia, 2017).

While childbearing occurs right after marriage, it is possible that pregnancy occurred before marriage and is the catalyst for getting married. These statistics are not common and come from small studies, but they shed light on an important subject. In India, in Uttar Pradesh, out of 235 boys who had premarital sexual relations, only 6 per cent reported their partner had become pregnant and out of 114 unmarried girls who had premarital relations, only 0.8 per cent reported that this resulted in pregnancy (Santhya et al., 2017). In Sri Lanka, premarital sex is common but qualitative interviews with men and women show that 'ideals of womanhood', need for secrecy and stigmatization of premarital sex were often raised together (Jordal et al., 2015; Pradah, Wynter and Fisher, 2015). If premarital pregnancy does occur, marriage may follow soon after to avoid the social stigma of childbirth out of wedlock. This explains why in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, the majority of adolescent childbearing occurs within marriage. As girls' agency increases and the number of adolescents in dating relationships rises, programmes and policies may more effectively focus on providing comprehensive sexuality education in order to empower girls and subsequently to delay adolescent pregnancy and child marriage (UNICEF ROSA, 2019).

SRH knowledge and contraceptive use alone do not sufficiently protect against child marriage, even as comprehensive sexuality education has been shown globally to positively affect knowledge, attitudes, practices, and behaviours (Chandra-Mouli, Lane and Wong, 2015). In Afghanistan, across gender, province, and type of location, knowledge of the health impacts of pregnancy and childbirth on young girls was not associated with decreased child marriage

## BOX 2 LESSONS LEARNED FROM GLOBAL REVIEW ON ASRH PROGRAMMING

**A recent review of global studies on adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) programming identified several challenges. Interventions are not reaching the population with the most pressing SRH needs and the most marginalized and vulnerable, as intended (e.g., TARUNYA Project, which was supported by the Government of Jharkhand State in India). Moreover, strategies such as youth centres, peer education, and high-profile meetings on adolescent SRH that have been shown to be ineffective (globally through meta-analyses and large-scale evaluation studies) are still being implemented. There is little or no implementation of components that have been shown to be effective (such as comprehensive sexuality education and providing appropriate SRH services). The authors of the review call for coordinated and complementary approaches that prioritize prevention strategies.**

*Source: Chandra-Mouli, V., C. Lane and S. Wong, What Does Not Work in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health: A Review of Evidence on Interventions Commonly Accepted as Best Practices. Global Health: Science and Practice, 3(3), 2015, pp. 333-340.*

practices, even though respondents saw the value in deciding to delay marriage. In Pakistan, among women aged 21–34 years who were married as children, knowledge of the negative health impacts of child marriage was limited and though some women had suffered health consequences, they did not think their problems were related to child marriage (Nasrullah, Zakar and Zakar, 2014). Additionally, a global synthesis report finds that ending child marriage by itself will not have a large impact on contraception use at national level (Wodon, et al., 2017). See Box 2 for lessons learned from global review of adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) programming (Chandra-Mouli, 2015).

General educational attainment is also associated with lower rates of fertility. Data from the Socio Demographic Economic Survey (SDES) in Afghanistan shows that for women, fertility level decreases consistently as education levels increase, though the “*observed differences in fertility level by education were relatively small*” (Chandra-Mouli, Lane and Wong, 2015, p. 33). Across the country’s six provinces, the total fertility rate for women who have had 7 or more years of schooling is much lower than for those who have had no schooling or 1–6 years of schooling, with one exception (Fernandez, Wong and Tia, 2017; Central Statistics Organization (CSO) Afghanistan and UNFPA Afghanistan, 2016). In Ghor province, the total fertility rate of those with more than 7 years of schooling is the same as those with no schooling. The results from Ghor are important because it has the lowest attendance rate, lowest literacy rate, and lowest net enrolment rate for boys and girls aged 7–18 years compared to the other five provinces studied (Bamiyan, Kabul, Daykundi, Kapisa and Parwan). This suggests, as mentioned above, that child marriage and childbearing may occur in parts of Afghanistan irrespective of education because many girls do not attend school (Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan and UNFPA Afghanistan, 2016). Despite these conflicting results between Ghor and the other five provinces, the results also suggest that having secondary education may be related to underlying changes in reproductive behaviour, partly because it delays marriage (Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan and UNFPA Afghanistan, 2016). However, since these effects are small more research is required.

Studies also find that the link between child marriage and HIV/AIDS is not straightforward. A recent presentation by Chandra-Mouli and Siddiqi at the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that to date no study has found that child marriage increases risk of HIV (Chandra-Mouli and Siddiqi, 2018). Moreover Raj and

Boehmer (2013) in analysing the 2009 MICS data across 97 countries (including six South Asian countries) found no association between national rates of girl child marriage and rates of HIV/AIDS. However, intergenerational sex for girls whose partners are 10 or more years older increases the risk of HIV/AIDS for adolescent girls suggesting that when girls marry much older men, then risk of HIV/AIDS increases. Moreover, married adolescents are more likely to have unprotected sex than unmarried adolescents.

## 5.2 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND CHILD MARRIAGE

There is significant variation within South Asia regarding the relative risk of domestic violence for adolescent brides compared to adult brides, but sexual and physical violence are shown to be common. In Nepal, one in three married girls experience sexual violence while one in six experience physical violence (Amin et al., 2014). In Pakistan, those who married as children are more likely to report controlling behaviours, and more physical and emotional violence (Plan International and Coram Children’s Legal Centre, 2014; Kidman, 2016; Nasrullah, Zakar and Zakar, 2014; Zakar, Zakar, and Abbas, 2016). Younger women in Bangladesh report lower levels of sexual violence in the last 12 months; the rate was highest in age group 20–24 (35%), followed by age group 25–29 (32%), but those in the age group 15–19 years had a lower prevalence (28%). A systematic review of 137 quantitative studies in India over the past 10 years finds that the evidence for domestic violence against adolescent brides from India is insufficient (Kalokhe et al., 2017).

**Acceptance of domestic violence can be understood in the context of social, cultural and religious practices.** A qualitative study in Afghanistan shows that forced marriage, child marriage, *baad*, *baadal*, and rape within marriage are understood as legitimate forms of sexual and gender-based violence and



justified in the context of tradition and religion (Ahmad and Avoine, 2018). Similarly, in Sri Lanka, community members view incest or forced sexual violence as sexual abuse, while sexual relations with child brides is not seen as abuse (Goonesekere and Amarasuriya, 2013). Internalization of gender norms appears to be strong among adolescents, especially girls. In Nepal, adolescent girls tend to hold more rigid norms around masculinity than boys (Amin et al., 2014). As a result, there is a culture of impunity that also seems to reinforce violence since very few cases of domestic violence are reported or prosecuted even where it is illegal.

**Ending child marriage will not substantially reduce intimate partner violence.** IPV is the result, at least in part, of widespread gender inequality (Wodon, et al., 2017) and ending child marriage by itself will not sufficiently change gender roles and norms to have a large impact on gender-based violence. While laws are in place that protect married girls from domestic violence, not one single country in South Asia has in place any legal protection for unmarried girls with respect to intimate-partner violence (Tavares and Wodon, 2018).

# 6

## INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE AND PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE

In addition to the UNICEF-UNFPA programme, Accelerating Action to End Child Marriage, there have been several others in South Asia that aimed to reduce child marriage. Solotaroff and Pande in their review of violence against girls and women find that South Asia had the “heaviest concentration of programs worldwide to prevent child marriage” (Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia, 2014, p. 153). Several efforts have been made to identify promising strategies to delay marriage, inclusive at global (Lee-Rife et al., 2012; Kalamar, Lee-Rife and Hindin, 2016), regional (Solotaroff and Pande, 2014), and country levels (Jha et al., 2016; UNICEF Nepal, 2014). An attempt was made to include all good programming in this review, but due to time and data constraints, priority was first given to comprehensive reviews of interventions, followed by UNICEF or UNFPA commissioned research, followed by reports of reputable international non-government organizations (INGOs) and think tanks.

Empowering girls with information, skills, and support networks is largely considered a promising strategy but insufficient to bring about desired results alone. There are several programming initiatives that are community based and targeting individuals, which show that empowering girls with information, skills, and support networks can have a positive impact on the overall agency of the girl (Amin et al., 2016; Jha et al., 2016; Solotaroff and Pande, 2014;

UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017; UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017). However, discussions at the 2016 meeting with experts on child marriage in South Asia caution that girl-centered programming risks putting pressure on girls themselves to change harmful practices and norms, which may lead to a backlash (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017).

Most of these interventions have not been rigorously evaluated and so more work is necessary to understand their effects. Among projects that have been evaluated, evidence supports the hypothesis that these programmes can reduce child marriage rates, but rigorous evidence is scant, mechanisms are not well understood and impacts are often small. In Bangladesh, the BALIKA project implemented a randomized controlled trial involving more than 9,000 girls aged 12–18 years and found that in communities where girls received the life skills component, girls were 31 per cent less likely to be married as children than girls in the control communities (Amin et al., 2016). In India, *Deepshika* provided life skills and soft skills to approximately 64,630 adolescent girls in Maharashtra and the endline evaluation showed that the project had been effective in increasing the level of awareness of girls on various topics like puberty, menstruation, legal age of marriage, malnutrition, and improving their decision-making abilities (Sambodhi Research and Communications, 2014). With respect to outcomes, between 2008 and 2011, 1,003

girls re-enrolled in schools and adolescent girl groups halted or delayed 280 marriages across four sites. The evaluation does not provide much detail on the extent of impact beyond the number of marriages averted. In Nepal, the final evaluation of the Girl Power Programme recognized the changing perceptions about the potential of girls by empowering girls through improved school and labour participation. Beneficiaries post-programme agree that girls should be able to continue education after marriage or childbirth, but the evaluation has no information on whether the programme actually delayed marriages (van Gerwen et al., 2016).

The intensity, scale up and handoff of successful programmes pose evaluation and consistency problems and effects may not be replicated as programmes grow. In India, the Pathfinder's Promoting Change in Reproductive Behaviour of Adolescents project (PRACHAR) provided a three-day life-skills education programme for all unmarried adolescents. The programme covered sex education, contraception, abortion, HIV/AIDS/STIs and life skills and had two types of delivery: an intensive full programme, and a government-led model involving community-based health workers who continued the programme but in a less intensive manner. The intensive programme resulted in a 44 per cent decrease of child marriage among women who were in the intervention (Pandey et al., 2016). However, when the government implemented the PRACHAR programme components, there were no impacts on age of marriage (Pandey et al., 2016). The design of this programme makes overall effects difficult to determine and points to evaluation challenges. Separately, in a randomized control trial with over 15,739 girls in Bangladesh, Buchannan and colleagues find that an empowerment curriculum that was similar to empowerment programmes being implemented worldwide (including having safe spaces, peer educators) did not change the likelihood of girls being married under 18 years but it did increase their access to schooling (Bachmann et al., 2017).

### BOX 3 CHALLENGES OF CHANGING NORMS – A SLOW PROCESS THAT REQUIRES BUY-IN

**Programming to change norms begins with respect for local values. This is the base on which to build rapport and buy-in from the community before addressing gender norms underlying harmful traditional practices. In Nepal, community members trust government-run programmes more, on average, than NGO-run programmes (e.g., Kishori programme). One of the main reasons is that the government-sponsored programmes are implemented by village-level women's cooperatives. Entrusting girls to known female members of the community and having sessions in the same spaces where the girls' mothers were members is crucial to the programme's success. In keeping with the challenge of changing social norms, the topics chosen for early sessions, such as 'Livelihoods', were considered 'useful' before moving onto topics like SRH which was highly taboo. In a discussion of centralized vs. decentralized approaches, Samuels, Ghmire and Maclure (2018) note that decentralized models "are sometimes too tightly bound to women's cooperatives, depend too much on top-down programming that ignores local and age-related need, and exclude the boys and men – and even mothers – who must join dialogues and play an active role in order to shift gender norms over the long term" (p. 185).**

**Source: Samuels, F., A. Ghmire and M. Maclure, *Continuity and slow change: How embedded programmes improve the lives of adolescent girls*, In C. Harper et al. eds. *Empowering Adolescent Girls in Developing Countries: Gender Justice and Norm Change*, New York, Routledge, 2018, pp. 177–189.**

Alongside an increased understanding of the social and gender norms that shape child marriage is the idea that awareness-building by educating and mobilizing parents and community members will help to shift social norms. Changing norms may be instrumental

in changing practices. Jha et al., note “social norms (including caste-based traditions), vested interest groups, gender prescriptions and political patronage” (p. 19) should be used to inform strategies to reduce child marriage (Jha et al., 2016). There are several promising approaches that are used to shift social norms. For instance, CARE’s Tipping Point programme posits several design principles for social norm change – find people who support girls’ agency and build their support groups; provide messages that are positive and hopeful about the future; create open spaces to challenge implicit assumptions; facilitate public conversations; engage bystanders to act, reinforce and rally behind positive deviance cases; and map allies for support (CARE International, 2016). Keeping these in mind, CARE has started football for girls in Bangladesh, cooking competitions for boys in Nepal and street theatre called *Amader Kotha* in Bangladesh to name a few innovative strategies. However, as Box 3 shows, changing norms is a slow process (Samuels, Ghmire and Maclure, 2018).

One important and promising approach has been to engage relevant stakeholders such as local leaders, and men and boys, but rigorous evaluation of such initiatives are few. Engaging religious leaders and men and boys is considered one pathway through which social and gender norms may change. Several initiatives have documented the importance of engaging men and boys in their interventions. In India, there are no government schemes that encourage engaging men and boys in directly reducing child marriage (Jha et al., 2016), but in 2016, the government launched the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojna*, whose main focus is on the declining child sex-ratio, and included men and boys. In terms of NGO programming in India, Program P seeks to engage fathers in the promotion of gender equality in the home and the prevention of child marriage (Greene et al., 2015). In Bangladesh, Choices by Save the Children uses a three-day package on gender equity for young boys

aged 10-14 years. In Bangladesh and Nepal, CARE’s Tipping Point engages men and boys through tea stall conversations or role-playing of the other gender’s daily work. The need to include men and boys is also highlighted by beneficiaries themselves – in Bangladesh, more than 85 per cent of ever-married women (out of 7,000) believe that men can make important contributions towards ending child marriage by refusing to get married to under-age girls, informing appropriate authorities of child marriages, discouraging child marriage in their own family, and promoting girl’s education (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017). Other promising initiatives include engagement with key stakeholders, such as parents, community leaders and government officers. For instance, Plan Asia uses a child centered community development (CCCD) approach in Bangladesh, India and Nepal to promote linkages with teachers, religious leaders and other community leaders (Verma, Sinha and Khanna, 2013). However, while there are several initiatives to engage men and boys and faith-based leaders, rigorous evaluations to assess their impact are limited (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017).

New evidence also points to communication activities as being a promising strategy in changing gender norms, attitudes and behaviours. For instance, in Nepal, an anti-dowry public service announcement sponsored by the National Campaign to End Child Marriage, is playing on radio and TV, and in movie theatres, especially in the Terai region. In India, Breakthrough’s Nation against Early Marriage campaign in Bihar and Jharkhand uses street theater, mass media, community engagement and youth leadership training to raise awareness of the harmful consequences of child marriage and to build cultural support for ending it. The endline evaluation of 500 episodes of *Kyunki... Jeena Issi Ka Naam Hai* (Because...That’s What Life Is), UNICEF India’s Hindi entertainment-education serial, surveying over 9,000 women found that 61 per cent of them were determined to stop marriage before 18 years (UNICEF India, 2014). There was also overall positive impact

on maternal health, child nutrition, and increased enrolment of girls in school (UNICEF India, 2014).

Many varied communications programmes are present in South Asia (Marcus, 2015). Radio shows (such as *Taru* in India or *Sathi Sanga Man ka Kura* in Nepal) in addition to TV cartoon series such as the Meena Communication Initiative in South Asian countries by UNICEF) helped girls feel confident to challenge gender norms and conventions by taking on tasks that are traditionally considered masculine, talking to boys, and changing attitudes towards dowry and girls' education. Moreover, shows like *Sathi Sanga Man ka Kura* in Nepal provide adolescents with SRH information and information on issues relevant to adolescents (like how to handle love relationships). Some key take-away messages from this systematic review are presented in Box 4.

An underlying theory of change for child marriage that cites poverty as a significant driver dictates the study of cash transfers and how they might contribute to economic stability and lower rates of child marriage. Overall, there is more evidence on conditional cash transfers (CCTs) than unconditional ones. Despite the obvious link suggested by the literature, few cash programmes tackle child marriage directly and instead focus on intermediate outcomes such as the completion of secondary school. Studies on offering economic support and incentives for girls and their families to complete education and discourage child marriage find that educational stipends are important, but their impacts remain unclear due to mixed outcomes. In Bangladesh, evidence from long-term evaluation of the Female Secondary School Stipend Programme finds that it increased years of education for eligible girls by 14–25 per cent and delayed marriage for girls (Hahn et al., 2015). However, UNICEF ROSA cites the work by Heath and Mubarak (2015) who note that labour force participation, such as the presence of garment factories in Bangladesh are likely to have a stronger impact on delaying marriage, especially for younger girls, than the female secondary school stipend programme (UNICEF

#### BOX 4 KEY TAKE AWAY MESSAGES ON EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES TO CHANGE GENDER NORMS

- **No consensus on how long the initiative must be to achieve success but longer duration or more intense activities typically led to greater change.**
- **Long term impacts on changing gender norms beyond end of programmes still remain unknown.**
- **Multipronged communication activities that used several channels at the same time were most effective in changing gender norms (e.g., face-to-face dialogue, mass media and IEC material). However, not much evidence on what content and which combination of media activities are more effective).**
- **Evidence is weak on informal communication though it is clear that programmes such as 'We Can End All Violence Against Women' in India rely on communication between peers or families.**
- **No evidence on how social media, mobiles and texts can help communication channels.**
- **Evaluations do not adequately discuss cost benefits or include any cost-effectiveness discussion.**

*Source: Marcus, R., Communications to change discriminatory gender norms affecting adolescent girls, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2015.*

ROSA, 2019). In Nepal, girls are more likely to receive stipend support for primary school and secondary school than boys, but stipend support for secondary school is still low and girls still drop out faster than boys (Chan, 2015). In Bangladesh, school dropout remains high despite 60 per cent of girls receiving stipends in secondary school in the Southwestern region (Amin et al., 2016). Studies also note that having a condition on staying in school instead of having a condition *only* on delaying marriage means that such programmes often ignore out-of-school girls (Buchmann, et al., 2017).

As few CCTs have not been specifically designed with a no-marriage condition, there is no consensus on which type of condition may be more effective at reducing child marriage. In Bangladesh, one randomized control trial (RCT) shows that condition on child marriage is more effective at reducing child marriage than on increasing education (International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, 2017). On the other hand, the Apni Beti Apna Dhan (ABAD) programme evaluation shows that the conditional cash programme (on both completing education and not being married at 18) did not affect

the probability of being ever married or being married before the age of 18, but it did impact the number of girls completing secondary school (Nanda, Datta and Das, 2014). Similarly, a mapping conducted by UNICEF and UNFPA in South Asia found that the evidence in support of cash transfers increasing the age of marriage was inconclusive, and that delaying the age of marriage does not result in a significant shift in parental attitudes towards marriage, or translate into broader changes for the better for girls (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2018).

# 7

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY COHERENCE ON CHILD MARRIAGE

Several regional and national strategies, action plans and campaigns that explicitly address child marriage, have been put in place. These strategies form part of a broader legal framework that seeks to address violence against women and patriarchal norms. In many spheres, child marriage is still “*perceived merely as a ‘social evil’ rather than as a criminal offense*” (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017, p. 15).

Changes in the legal framework seek to alter this perception, but face challenges due to intersectionalities arising from existing norms, beliefs, attitudes and practices, as well as limits on the ability of governments to fund adequate programming and enforce existing laws.

At the national level, several noteworthy advances have been made throughout the region to achieve consensus on how to address child marriage.

**Afghanistan:** In April 2017, Afghanistan launched its National Action Plan to Eliminate Early and Child Marriage 2017–2021.

**Nepal:** An amendment that directly prohibits child marriage (art. 39(5)) was introduced in the Constitution of Nepal in 2015. In addition, the Government of Nepal laid out policies to combat child marriage in the National Strategy to End Child Marriage, which was adopted in 2016. Child marriage is addressed in Nepal’s National Penal Code Act, 2017, and National Civil Code

Act, 2017, both of which entered into force from 17 August 2018.

**Bangladesh:** On 2 August 2018, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and UNICEF Bangladesh finalized and launched the National Plan of Action aiming to end child marriage (for girls under 15 by 2021 and for girls under 18 by 2041). Bangladesh also repealed the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 and put forth a revised Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) 2017 (Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, 2017).

**India:** In India, progress is slower. As of 2018, the government was yet to adopt the National Strategy on the Prevention of Child Marriage and the National Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage. To date, both remain in draft form (Center for Reproductive Rights and Centre for Law and Policy Research, 2018), although there are some plans at the State level.

### 7.1 MINIMUM AGE OF LEGAL MARRIAGE AND PUNISHMENTS FOR OFFENDERS

There have been some shifts in the legal landscape regarding minimum age of legal marriage in recent years, with several countries making positive strides and others reversing positive policies. These shifts reflect a global consensus, as seen in the CRC and CEDAW

**TABLE 3** MINIMUM AGE FOR MARRIAGE, BY COUNTRY AND SEX.

	Girls	Girls with Parental consent/court approval	Boys	Boys with Parental consent/court approval
<b>Afghanistan</b>	16	15	18	—
<b>Bangladesh</b>	18	No minimum	21	No minimum
<b>Bhutan</b>	16	—	18	—
<b>India</b>	18	—	21	—
<b>Maldives</b>	18	Puberty	18	Puberty
<b>Nepal</b>	20	—	20	—
<b>Pakistan (Federal)</b>	16	—	18	—
Punjab	16	—	18	—
Sindh	18	—	18	—
Other jurisdictions	16	—	18	—
Hindu marriages	18	—	18	—
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	18	No minimum for Muslim marriages	18	No minimum for Muslim marriages

committee’s general comment on harmful practices confirming that child marriage constitutes marriage under 18 years, but allows for marriage at 16 years under exceptional circumstances (CEDAW and CRC, 2014). In Bangladesh, the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 removed any minimum age of marriage though some note efforts by the government to limit child marriage in other ways (Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, 2017). In Pakistan, dialogue has increased, but overall progress is slow in adoption and implementation at the national level. In 2014, the Provincial Assembly passed the Sindh Child Marriages Restraint Act fixing the minimum age of marriage for both males and females at 18 and declaring the offences under the Act as cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable (Government of Pakistan, 2014). However, the nationwide bill was struck down in 2014 and in 2017 (Junaidi, 2017) and taken up again in November 2018 (Ijaz, 2018). In February 2017, Punjab increased

the penalty for those marrying girls under age 16 but did not adopt a higher minimum age of marriage. Other countries have had more success. The legal age of marriage in Nepal is 20 years for both men and women and a clause that allowed marriage at 18 years with parental consent was withdrawn in 2015.

Simply having a minimum age law is not enough to stop child marriage given that annually 7.5 million girls are married in the world. A World Bank report examined data from 112 countries between 2015 and 2017 to assess whether changes in minimum age law have an impact on child marriage and found that “while national laws against child marriage are important, they are not sufficient for ending the practice. Globally, even after accounting for exceptions to the legal age of marriage with parental or judicial consent, 7.5 million girls marry illegally each year (20,000 girls per day), making up 68 per cent of child marriages” (Wodon et al., 2017, p. 2).



This suggests that underground practices remain prevalent and additional interventions are needed to prevent child marriage. This was corroborated by a secondary analysis of DHS data from 60 developing nations where the authors conclude that new laws, in isolation, are not enough to prevent child marriage (Collin and Talbot, 2017).

The enforcement of minimum age of marriage laws is at least partially predicated on whether the law is widely known and understood, as well as how they reflect or sit in relation to religious and cultural norms around age of marriage. There is considerable evidence that despite programming efforts, a majority of the adult population in South Asia are either unaware that child marriage is illegal or unaware of the legal age of marriage (Government of Afghanistan and Samuel Hall, 2018; Jha et. al., 2016; Central Department of Population Studies, 2017; Plan International and Coram Children's Legal Centre, 2014; Amin et.al., 2014). Other work from Bangladesh shows that awareness of minimum age law or laws that prohibit child marriage is widespread (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018). The baseline survey of the ADOHEARTS initiative, which aimed to increase access to and information about adolescent friendly health services, found that in a sample of over 3,000 adolescents, more than 80 per cent of those aged 15–19 years and more than 75 per cent of those aged 10–14 years had the correct knowledge about the legal age of marriage (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017). These conflicting results are likely due to religious or cultural justifications that are at the forefront of many public debates on what constitutes legal age of marriage and are often a primary source of guidance for families (CEDAW and CRC, 2014). For instance, in India, the Gujrat High Court upheld a marriage of a Muslim girl under Muslim Personal Law (Mandhani, 2014). In Sri Lanka, proponents and opponents of the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act enacted in 1951, which defines legal rules on marriage and divorce according to Sharia law, led to protests in the country (Verité Research, 2018).

## BOX 5 LESSONS LEARNED FOR EFFECTIVE NATIONAL PLANS TO REDUCE CHILD MARRIAGE

*“The success of a national strategy ultimately hinges on the strength, leadership, commitment, organization and capacity of a government. Without strong leadership or political will, any efforts to tackle child marriage multisectorally will not and cannot reach scale.”*

*Girls Not Brides, 2015, p. 7*

**In 2015, UNICEF Nepal and Girls Not Brides, released a report on lessons learned from national initiatives in four countries, including Nepal. They note that the 2015 earthquake, which killed almost 9,000 people and left some \$10 billion worth of damage, had stalled progress on the country’s initiative to end child marriage. However since then, other evidence indicates that Nepal remains committed to its strategy to end child marriage under the leadership of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. Using desk reviews and key informant interviews, the report identified initial lessons about the development, contents and implementation of these initiatives. First, participation of all stakeholders, including adolescents who are affected by these policies, is necessary to build ownership and ensure buy-in and acceptance at community level. Second, a multisectoral approach is critical to ensure that the complexities of child marriage are tackled simultaneously. Third, a multisectoral approach needs a strong collaboration and coordination, and open communication between sectors and stakeholders in order to maximize impact on child marriage. National plans are seen as important to reach the scale needed to end child marriage and thus, clear communication on development and implementation and roles and responsibilities is critical. Moreover, it is necessary to invest time and resources to understand why change has occurred and how it can be replicated. Finally, the report notes that evidence must inform the content of the strategies.**

*Source: Travers, E., and F. K. Moudouthe, Lessons Learned from Selected National Initiatives to End Child Marriage, Girls Not Brides, 2015.*

More research is needed into whether informing families about marriage laws has any effect on child marriage itself. In Bangladesh, awareness of laws is a small deterrent to reducing child marriage, but 49 per cent of households in a study of 6,000 households were aware of the law and still had a girl who married before 18 in 2017 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018).

In the cases where child marriage is identified and there is the will to end it, annulment or divorce are not straightforward. Loopholes in minimum age law and in annulment laws result in major obstacles to reducing child marriage and related negative outcomes. In some countries, child marriage is voidable but not void until one spouse initiates proceedings, often by meeting unreasonable criteria. In India, girls can annul marriage only until they are 20 years of age and the process of annulling a marriage entails obtaining a letter from someone in one's social network (Center for Reproductive Rights and Centre for Law & Policy Research, 2018). Given that members of the extended family are likely to be complicit in the child marriage, it seems unlikely that adolescent girls can get a letter from their social network. There are also challenges that result from India's multiple personal law system – the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) allows a marriage to be void until 20 years but the Hindu Marriage Act only allows marriages before age 15 to be voided (Centre for Reproductive Rights 2014). Until recently in Nepal, conversely, one could not void a child marriage until the girl turned 20 years old (Center for Reproductive Rights, JuRI-Nepal, and UNFPA, 2016). An amendment for this provision is already registered in the parliament to harmonize two civil codes, one that makes such marriage voidable and another that makes it ipso facto void. In both countries, however, across all personal laws and national laws, consent or showing willingness to be married is not considered essential for a marriage to be valid. In some countries (e.g., Bangladesh), while child marriage is illegal, there are no laws to annul or void the marriage

(Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, 2017). Where annulment or voiding of child marriages is permitted legally, former child brides may face discrimination and stigma as a result of leaving marriages. They may be unable to marry again or be ostracized in their communities as a result of leaving the marriage, making them more vulnerable to other adverse outcomes such as poverty and trafficking (Center for Reproductive Rights, JuRI-Nepal and UNFPA, 2016).

## 7.2 APPROACHES TO BUDGETING AND FINANCE AND CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

The implementation of a coherent legal framework for child marriage, including appropriate enforcement and assessment of facilitating and inhibiting factors, is not a cheap proposition, and insufficient attention has been paid to related government expenditures. In light of these substantial outlays, it is imperative to note that the economic impacts of child marriage are high, especially for fertility, population growth, education, and earnings, and have large effects on macro-level economic health and prosperity. One estimate for Nepal states that the "cost of inaction" on child marriage for girls aged 15-19 over the next 36 years may cost the country 3.87 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (UNICEF Nepal, 2014). Delaying marriage and opening labour markets to young women may yield profound economic benefits. Similarly, the global report on the economic costs of child marriage finds that the impacts of ending child marriage for girls and women are largest for fertility, population growth, education and earnings (Wodon et al., 2017).

Across the region, child marriage programmes constitute a small proportion of government's budgets, and the lack of resources on costing of national action plans or state-level schemes indicate that child marriage is often a low priority budget-wise. In Bangladesh, a scoping analysis finds that "when viewed relative to the Government's overall budget operations, total

budgeted amounts for early/child marriage-relevant programmes/projects appear very limited” (p. 30) – a total of 1.27 per cent of the total government budget was allocated to child marriage related programmes (BBS and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017). Within the larger portfolio of child protection projects, the main target areas were social safety net programmes, adolescent health programmes, and secondary education (BBS and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017). Despite the small amounts earmarked, total expenditure for child protection increased by 63 per cent over the past six years (BBS and UNICEF Bangladesh, 2017). In Sri Lanka, an evaluation of the child-friendly budgeting for children by Save the Children finds that health and education are each allocated 4–5 per cent of the total national budget, while child protection receives less than 1 per cent (Save the Children International, 2016). In Rajasthan, India, the state-level budget included schemes to provide annual awards at the district, block, and village level to incentivize prevention of child marriage with the award money being in the range of INR100,000 to INR2,500,000 (Jha et al., 2016).

‘Systems thinking’ has emerged as an effective lens to view child marriage as a one thematic area of a larger child protection goal, and an integrated child protection systems approach may better protect children than a vertical thematic approach. In 2018, a review of child protection systems change in Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan finds that there is a general belief among practitioners and professionals that children were gradually being better protected from abuse, violence and exploitation as a result of a systems approach. It also found that system strengthening programmes address the system core processes like policies, laws and decision-making, as well as the system schematic such as its mission and purpose, mandates and communities of leadership. However, the review questioned whether programme interventions overall can address the deep-seated beliefs and memes that would result in organizational members being aware of the present system and being able to change it (UNICEF

ROSA, 2018). Child marriage as an accepted social practice and norm means “systems strengthening must involve changes not only to core processes, but also to the system schemata and ultimately to the deep cultural beliefs and assumptions” (UNICEF ROSA, 2018, p. 66). Qualitative findings from this report indicate that in both Nepal and Pakistan, strengthening child protection systems has helped bring about wider social and economic changes that in turn have helped reduce child marriage (UNICEF ROSA, 2018).

Systems change, even more so than individual actions, requires significant funding and budget commitments on the part of governments and international partners. When considered as a single theme, evidence from an evaluation of Nepal’s National Plan of Action for Children (NPA/C), finds that overall the national action plan had no measurable impact since there was no evidence of its implementation and no evidence of any monitoring system in place (Cabran and Joshi, 2015). This evaluation, commissioned by the Government of Nepal and UNICEF Nepal, found that the lack of impact of the action plan was largely due to the absence of each sector and ministry to budget for their specific activities as outlined in the NPA/C (Cabran and Joshi, 2015).

### **7.3 BROADER LEGAL FRAMEWORK: MARITAL RAPE, INHERITANCE LAWS, AND YOUTH AND ADOLESCENTS**

Along with systems thinking for child protection, more attention has been focused on a broader legal framework that tangentially touches child marriage or eliminates loopholes through which such harmful practices may persist. Marital rape remains legal in much of the region, though there has recently been more attention paid to the issue, and on the experiences of girls in particular. In 2017, the Indian Supreme Court ruled that sex with a child bride who is between 15 and 18 years old is considered rape (Bhalla, 2017). The Supreme Court of Nepal, in the case

of Lok Bahadur Sarki et al. vs. “Kha” Kumari in 2014, held that sexual intercourse with a 14-year old girl, even after marrying her, would amount to the offence of rape since the law does not recognize the consent of a person under the age of 16. Hence, marriage with a minor cannot be a defense to the charge of rape (Patrika, 2015).

Inheritance laws, which have traditionally favoured boys, are also changing in Nepal. Formerly, research on India shows that changing inheritance laws so that girls receive a portion of their fathers’ assets after his death may increase average age of marriage for girls (UNICEF ROSA, 2018). As such, there is promise in the anticipated adoption of new, more egalitarian inheritance laws, such as the new Civil Code in Nepal that will replace the *Muluki Ain* or General Code, which has been in effect for 164 years.

The adoption of policies and initiatives that focus exclusively on youth and adolescents and occasionally include references to child marriage, is an important step forward. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has finalized the National Adolescent Health Strategy (2017–2030), which specifically mentions child marriage as a form of violence against adolescents. In Bhutan, the government has initiated Youth Friendly Health Services (2013–2018) to increase youth access to health services. A secondary objective is to prevent early marriage by providing girls with better information and services on reproductive health. In Nepal, in 2013, a National Plan of Action for the Holistic Development of Adolescents was launched to broadly address adolescents’ health, education, employment prospects, skills development and civic participation. In India, two national programmes were launched in 2014: The National Adolescent Health Strategy (*‘Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram’*) and *‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’*, a programme to address the gender imbalance in sex ratios and child marriage in 100 districts across India (Young Lives, 2016).

Programmes focused on youth also face challenges in design and implementation. In India, the two youth-focused programmes discussed above comply with many suggestions from the research such as offering youth-friendly services, but lack in other areas. The heavy focus on peer educators may inhibit implementation as studies in India have shown that less than 10 per cent of adolescents and youth are aware of adolescent friendly clinics and less than 1 per cent have accessed such services (Santhya and Jejeebhoy, 2015). Moreover, neither programme has called for comprehensive sexuality education, focusing instead on topics like nutrition and hygiene. Given the intersecting nature of gender norms and pre-marital pregnancy, and child marriage, comprehensive sexuality education needs to be a critical component of all adolescent and youth health initiatives.

Poor implementation, lack of coherence in the legal system, too strict and/or too weak enforcement of laws, and cultural norms all play a role in complicating the enactment of laws and policy effectiveness. Laws do not adequately protect child brides and child grooms, or those who seek annulments or divorces. The recent ruling in India that criminalizes sex with child brides faces many challenges (DW, 2017). First, young brides are unlikely to ask their parents or siblings to help them lodge a complaint given the likely complicit nature of extended family in the child marriage. Second, there is a strong likelihood of falsely imprisoning young boys and girls who are consensually choosing to be in a physical relationship. Indeed, there are increasing numbers of young boys and girls who are facing harsh punishments as a result of choosing to elope and get married. In Bangladesh, the CMRA 2017, notes that underage girls and boys who will be punished with imprisonment of not more than 15 days or be fined no more than BDT 5,000.00 or both (Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, 2017). Often parents use laws to break up own-choice marriages that they do not approve. In India, the Law Commission in its

242nd report had proposed a law for freedom of matrimonial alliances (Law Commission of India, 2012) – to make laws to protect inter-caste marriages (Mahapatra, 2018; Junaidi, 2017), but as of 2018 no law had been passed. In Pakistan, there are inconsistencies in the legal definition of a child at federal, provincial and territorial levels and between secular and Sharia law (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016). In Nepal, even though a new Civil Code recognizes women as equal citizens who can inherit properties (even post-marriage), there are several loopholes that raise concerns. Some provisions of the Code make it difficult for women seeking divorce or widows claiming or retaining their property share (Mulmi, 2017). While laws to punish those who elope or choose own-choice marriages are enforced too strongly, other laws are not enforced strictly enough. In all countries in the region, local enforcement officers are often driven by their own beliefs about child marriage and thus, do not enforce penalties against parents who force children into marriage (Center for Reproductive Rights, JuRI-Nepal and UNFPA, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2016).

Civil registration has been designated a key issue in the Asia and the Pacific region for the coming years. Birth registration – primarily branded as a human rights issue and necessary for children to gain access to health care, education, and protective services – is another link into enforcement of child marriage laws (Edlund et. al, 2007). In South Asia, only 67 per cent of children under 5 have their births recorded, making enforcement of child marriage laws more difficult. UNICEF aims to have every child's birth recorded by 2030 (UNICEF, 2019; UN, 2015). Without birth registration, caregivers can obfuscate or patently lie about a child's age in order to allow a marriage go forward. The concurrent low rate of marriage registration also puts children at risk. Marriage registration improves tracking of marriages and age at marriage, and, when combined with birth registration allows for a better understanding of timing of births, divorce and social incentives around marriage (Gregson, 2018).

# 8

## UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

As the universe of programmes and policies targeting child marriage grows, it is important to watch for unintended consequences, particularly adverse ones. Broader legislative coherence and enforcement alongside strong norms supporting lower rates of child marriage and even interventions may lead to lower rates of child marriage but are not without potential pitfalls. For instance, a regional meeting of experts on child marriage in 2016 suggested that the relationship between sex-selection at birth and marriage squeeze might be cyclical (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2017). With an increase in age in marriage, it is argued that parents will have to invest longer in their daughters before they marry which in turn create contexts for further sex-selection at birth. Research preceding this review theorized that high rates of unmarried men could lead to more violence and insecurity (Edlund et al., 2007) and trafficking (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2018), though more recent research suggests that missing girls is not leading to rising rates of violence in China and India (Golley and Tyers, 2012; Kaur et al., 2017). This is an area that merits further investigation.

Although associated with increased age of marriage and decreasing age gap, the 'marriage squeeze' may be cyclical in nature. There is evidence that India has an unbalanced sex ratio, driven by the 'missing women' at birth phenomenon. As a result, there is an excess of males to females in India. Marriage squeeze occurs when there is an unbalanced sex ratio,

as some will be squeezed out of the marriage market. In India, this means that males are 'squeezed' out of the market due to lack of suitable brides. It is believed that marriage squeeze will get worse over the next 10 years (Kaur et al., 2016). This unbalanced demand and supply of women has loosened some of the rigid gender norms in the country (Kaur et al., 2016). Authors posit that due to marriage squeeze, the age gap between men and women's age of marriage is decreasing because there simply aren't enough women to marry early (Kaur and Palriwala, 2014). Combined with shifts such as increasing education levels of men and women, and female education hypergamy, marriage squeeze has also contributed to an increasing age of marriage for both genders (Kaur and Palriwala, 2014).

There are potential unintended consequences that result from interventions designed to reduce child marriage that could in fact increase the probability of marriage or at least reinforce norms around dowry payments. The evaluation of the ABAD programme finds that the cash from the CCT was used to cover marriage expenses or to cover dowry. For those who had not yet cashed out, 53 per cent intended to use the cash for their marriage and only 32 per cent for education (Nanda, Datta and Das, 2014). Similarly, a central government scheme in India, *Dhanlakshmi*, provided small grants at the birth of a girl child all the way until her 18th birthday when she received a larger sum if she was unmarried. The evaluation found that although there were some positive changes in parents' equitable gender attitudes, 69 per cent of parents also chose to use the money to pay for marriage expenses (UNFPA India, 2015). This programme's evaluation report recommended delinking schemes from marriage and helping change the perception that the lump sum is government assistance for marriage (UNFPA India, 2015). Similarly, in Nepal, evaluations find that sometimes education can have the opposite effect on child marriage. Educating girls may signal wealth and thus, indirectly signal an ability to pay dowry (Amin et al., 2014). There

## UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

is almost no research that explains whether CCTs have longer-term impact on social norms and attitudes on child marriage within the community (Amin et al., 2016).

Additionally, inclusion and exclusion criteria of beneficiaries within schemes may inadvertently disadvantage those they are trying to help. For example, in India, schemes based on sexual and reproductive health often exclude pregnant girls under 19 years based on the belief that providing incentives to childbearing girls under

19 years may increase child marriage (Center for Reproductive Rights and Centre for Law and Policy Research, 2018). However, an evaluation of the Janani Suraksha Yojana, a maternal health scheme that encourages hospital delivery, finds that having such an exclusion criteria could force local health workers into recording the girl's age as more than 19 so that she can continue to have access to the benefits of the scheme (Center for Reproductive Rights and Centre for Law and Policy Research, 2018).

# 9

## AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDY

### 9.1 QUESTIONS ARISING FROM RECENT WORK

This review uncovered several areas of research that merit further investigation. They cover a broad swath of questions, but on a meta level represent an increased understanding of the nuances of addressing a complicated issue such as child marriage. Child marriage is not, as some practitioners have traditionally stated, a problem of poverty alone that can be fixed through measures such as conditional cash transfers, but also a cultural and social institution that is deeply embedded in communities, norms, and cultural and religious frameworks, and deserving of a careful view. Child marriage is neither a problem that can be solved easily through norm change or directed cash transfers, highlighting the intersecting drivers. This section provides a summary of some areas uncovered that are ripe for research.

There is a strong need for research to examine and understand contexts within countries where child marriage persists or is increasing. In order to ensure that any progress made in eradicating child marriage does not stall, it remains important to examine why child marriage continues to persist in some contexts but not in others. Moreover, research should be encouraged to present both national and within country estimates, as well as estimates that take into account marginalized groups, and the role of migration and urbanization. In the area of

social norms and agency there are questions such as: Which social norms underlying child marriage are changing? Why are some not changing? How do economic growth and changing social norms relate to each other? Better understanding of the perceived disconnect between norms and personal beliefs will further illuminate which levers to pull when designing programming and policy.

Researchers need to examine the drivers, consequences and power dynamics between adolescents and parents, and related linkages of own-choice marriages. There needs to be clear distinctions made between love marriages, elopements and cohabitation, and research needs to understand the nature and drivers of each separately. At the same time, research needs to unpack ways to provide adolescents with alternate avenues to elopements/marriages. Further there is a need to examine how to provide comprehensive sexuality education in contexts in order to reduce adolescent pregnancy as well as changing social norms that penalize pre-marital sexual activity, so that marriage is seen as the only route to engage in sexual relations. It is important to recognize that simply providing agency to adolescents does not mean child marriage is averted.

Access to health and gender-based violence services and education should be further investigated to be able to make causal claims. Identifying critical points along the educational attainment spectrum and how access to comprehensive sexual education and reproductive services, is key to understanding barriers to reducing child marriage. There is space to investigate under-reporting of live births, lack of contraception access, the domino effect of an unbalanced sex ratio, and expanding work on how to provide CSE is needed.

This review uncovered little evidence on the effectiveness of long-term communication in reducing child marriage, informal communications, the role of social media and mobile phones in enhancing communication activities, and cost-benefits of communication strategies.



## AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Legal reviews and reform are needed to understand challenges to a broader legal framework and child protection system that supports ending child marriage alongside deeply held cultural beliefs and assumptions. Annulment laws, civil registration, and an accounting of budgeting and finance for such initiatives is key to understanding what are the ways in which these loopholes can be addressed and closed.

### 9.2 PERSISTENT GAPS IN RESEARCH

This review, while not exhaustive, has helped to identify areas where future research might focus. Most noticeably, there is a stark geographic divide in both the quality and quantity of research across countries. This divide is not new but should be remedied. Specifically, there is more existing research on child marriage in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. For Afghanistan and Pakistan, a few studies were identified, but not as many as the aforementioned countries. Both data and analysis are in short supply

on Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. Large and diverse populations in the most studied countries require large investments, but the lack of information on smaller countries should be remedied in order to be able to address both current child marriage situations and improvements.

Although a much smaller proportion of child marriages involve boys, child grooms remain under-studied and there is an urgent need to examine how boys' experiences differ from those of girls.

As NAPs gain prominence as a focus of advocates and international organizations and associated policies are put in place with the aim of reducing child marriage, attention should be paid to the budgeting for these processes. Very few resources outlining budget allocations were found and more research is needed to evaluate whether budgets are child friendly and how they are approaching child marriage programmes and schemes.

# 10

## CONCLUSIONS

This review of programming and policy covering the years 2014 to 2018 consists of a comprehensive, but not exhaustive, examination of scholarly papers, meta-reviews, NGO and multilateral reports and more, on child marriage and associated topics for the South Asia region. This review finds that while there has been considerable progress made on certain dimensions with respect to child marriage and research on child marriage, the complexity of the problem of child marriage becomes only more apparent with more detailed and nuanced investigation. As evidenced by national level statistics, child marriage is indeed falling around the world and in South Asia in particular, but within-country estimates paint a starkly different picture. Persistent cultural practices related to child marriage have been explored and how to stem them in the context of sticky norms remains an enduring problem for policymakers and programme implementers. In large part, implementing programming that takes a systems view may be an effective tool to reducing child marriage, but efforts must be sufficiently funded, backed by a coherent legal framework and supportive norms.

Other notable findings were the rise of own-choice marriages in different forms and an increased sensibility of child marriage as key to social status or kinship networks. Increased access to education, mobility, technology, and differential mentorship or regulations by

adults contributes to a wide variety of outcomes regarding the types of marriages that children subscribe to. Child marriage is not a monolith, and research must better take into account the economic and social drivers and social, religious, and cultural norms that dictate on whose terms and when marriage takes place. More detailed understanding of women's empowerment and girls' agency, and how these interact with other institutions represents a great leap forward for the research, as well as an opportunity going forward.

Wealth and poverty is an exciting new area of research, particularly with the recent observation in Afghanistan that perception of economic vulnerability, as opposed to actual levels of income or wealth, appear to predict child marriage. At national level economic growth may be responsible in part for falling levels of child marriage but this cannot fully explain the regional and within country differences that persist.

In terms of education as a driver underlying child marriage, educational attainment or simply attending school was not enough to delay marriage. Educational components like literacy and completion of secondary education emerged as being more salient in delaying child marriage. In some countries like Nepal, primary school was more protective than secondary school, but tertiary education was more protective than both primary and secondary school. Other protective factors in addition to secondary school were education of head of household, future aspirations from education, and value placed on education (for younger girls in Nepal). Often these effects are not necessarily causal and, in the aggregate, may be cancelled out by both perceptions and real experiences of limited employment opportunities for girls and women.

Significant new research on gender and social norms emerged as root drivers of child marriage. Some of these norms remain unchanged or sticky, while some are changing, again highlighting within country differences and the need for disaggregated analysis focusing

## CONCLUSIONS

on hard-to-reach or marginalized populations, particular ethnic groups, and regional pockets where rates remain high. Contexts where norms are in flux may be most amenable to changing child marriage practices, especially where informational campaigns on the costs of child marriage have failed to change practices in the face of sticky norms. Avenues for future work should take into account the distinction between knowledge, attitudes and beliefs on the one hand and social norms on the other, and how they might differentially affect behaviors.

A systems approach to child marriage programming dictates a look at health outcomes such as total fertility and domestic violence alongside child marriage. Significant work that has been accomplished and reviewed here that shows causal links between these factors and child marriage are tenuous. A systems approach serves to caution that ending child marriage will not necessarily end domestic violence, for example, but rather that a single-minded focus on child marriage may result in missing or ignoring unintended consequences and issues that are correlated. A systems approach dictates that these issues should be viewed in tandem with child marriage and the reduction of one not seen as a panacea for the others, but rather that programming for the whole system creates a supporting environment for child marriage rates to fall while addressing related issues and mitigating unintended consequences.

National level action planning is on the rise in the region, though it remains under budgeted and unfinanced, in many cases. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal put in place initiatives to address child marriage directly and several countries made strides in developing plans specifically targeting adolescents and youth. However, while some initiatives

included child marriage, others did not. Plans focused on health outcomes overlooked a crucial component underlying own-choice marriages – comprehensive sexuality education. There were also several changes to minimum age laws in the region, whereby Bangladesh removed minimum age requirements, Nepal made positive progress and Pakistan had both positive and negative changes to its marriage laws. In tandem, customary or religious laws often work in parallel to national laws and there was considerable evidence that a majority of the South Asian population was unaware of the minimum age for marriage. Even where families are aware of laws prohibiting child marriage, children may be married off regardless, highlighting the dominant effects of social capital, incentives to conform, financial incentives and more. As a result, evidence found that the practice of child marriage continued illegally. Moreover, loopholes in marriage annulment laws have led to unintended consequences that made it challenging for girls to annul their marriages (in India).

The proliferation of research on child marriage in South Asia represents a sea change in the understanding of child marriage programming and policy. More in-depth and rigorous methods and new lines of inquiry were unearthed and illuminated important trends and heterogeneity in the practice of child marriage. As child marriage ideally continues to decline around the globe, and in South Asia in particular, having a clear picture of the drivers of those changes will be important for allocating funding and establishing programming. This review attempts to take lessons from the last four years of research in this area, highlighting the many exciting findings and pointing out questions that could be explored in the years to come.

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# APPENDIX I

## SEARCH STRINGS USED TO LOCATE RESOURCES

Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	South Asia						
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	South Asia				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				

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Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan						
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan		
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Afghanistan				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh						
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		



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Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh		
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bangladesh				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan						
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		

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Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan		
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Bhutan				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	India				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	India				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	India				
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	India				
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	India				
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	India				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	India						
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	India		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	India		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	India		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	India		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	India		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	India		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	India		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	India		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	India		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	India		
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	India				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	India				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	India				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	India				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				

APPENDIX I

Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Maldives						
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Maldives		
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Maldives				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Nepal						
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		

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Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Nepal		
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Nepal				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan						
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan		

APPENDIX I

Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Pakistan				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka						
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Brides	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka		
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Poverty	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Dowry	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Norms	<b>AND</b>	Sri Lanka				
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia

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Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Education	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Life skills	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Health	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Health	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Health	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Health	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Health	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Health	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Health	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		
Child	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Justice	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Bride	<b>AND</b>	Justice	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Child	<b>AND</b>	Groom	<b>AND</b>	Justice	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Early	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Justice	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Domestic	<b>AND</b>	Violence	<b>AND</b>	Justice	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Love	<b>AND</b>	Marriage	<b>AND</b>	Justice	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia
Elopement	<b>AND</b>	Justice	<b>AND</b>	Programming	<b>AND</b>	South Asia		





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