



**Pan African Campaign To
End Forced 'Marriage'
of Under Age Children**



*Multisectoral Information, Data, Research & Evidence
- for Health, Population, Human & Social Development*



**Africa Coalition On Maternal,
Newborn & Child Health**

Advancing Multi-sectoral Policy & Investment for Girls, Women, & Children's Health

UN Commission On Status Of Women [#CSW59] / Beijing+20 Review [#Beijing20]

African Union Heads of State Summit: – (2015 Theme) “Year of Women’s’ Empowerment and Development in Africa” [#Africa2063]

2015 Africa Scorecard on Underage/Child & Forced ‘Marriage’ – Implications For Health, Governance, Population, Economy & Human Rights

Ranking	Country	Underage/Child/Forced ‘Marriage’ Under 18 Years	Estimated Population of Adolescent Girls (As guide to scale Only)	Ranking	Country	Underage/Child/Forced ‘Marriage’ Under 15 Years
1	Niger	76%	1,978,000	Joint 1	Central African Rep.	29%
Joint 2	Central African Rep.	68%	521,000	Joint 1	Chad	29%
Joint 2	Chad	68%	1,513,000	2	Niger	28%
3	Mali	55%	1,706,000	3	Guinea	21%
Joint 4	Burkina Faso	52%	1,953,500	4	Sierra Leone	18%
Joint 4	Guinea	52%	1,316,500	5	Nigeria	17%
Joint 4	South Sudan	52%	1,272,000	6	Ethiopia	16%
5	Malawi	50%	1,898,000	7	Mali	15%
6	Mozambique	48%	2,917,500	Joint 8	Mauritania	14%
7	Somalia	45%	1,220,000	Joint 8	Mozambique	14%
8	Sierra Leone	44%	679,000	Joint 9	Cameroon	13%
9	Nigeria	43%	18,837,500	Joint 9	Eritrea	13%
10	Zambia	42%	1,678,500	Joint 10	Madagascar	12%
Joint 11	Ethiopia	41%	11,496,500	Joint 10	Malawi	12%
Joint 11	Eritrea	41%	672,000	Joint 10	Senegal	12%
Joint 11	Madagascar	41%	2,659,000	Joint 11	Benin	11%
12	Uganda	40%	4,445,000	Joint 11	Liberia	11%
13	D.R. Congo	39%	7,700,000	Joint 12	Burkina Faso	10%
Joint 14	Cameroon	38%	2,522,500	Joint 12	Comoros	10%
Joint 14	Liberia	38%	474,500	Joint 12	Cote d’Ivoire	10%
15	Tanzania	37%	5,414,000	Joint 12	Uganda	10%
16	Gambia	36%	208,000	Joint 13	D.R. Congo	9%

Ranking	Country	Underage/Child/Forced 'Marriage' Under 18 Years	Estimated Pop. Adolescent Girls	Ranking	Country	Underage/Child/Forced 'Marriage' Under 15 Years
Joint 17	Mauritania	34%	420,500	Joint 13	Equatorial Guinea	9%
Joint 17	Sao Tome & Principe	34%	20,000	Joint 13	South Sudan	9%
Joint 18	Congo	33%	473,500	Joint 13	Zambia	9%
Joint 18	Cote d'Ivoire	33%	2,295,500	14	Somalia	8%
Joint 18	Senegal	33%	1,581,000	Joint 15	Gambia	7%
Joint 18	Sudan	33%	4,273,000	Joint 15	Guinea-Bissau	7%
Joint 19	Benin	32%	1,165,000	Joint 15	Sudan	7%
Joint 19	Comoros	32%	77,500	Joint 15	Tanzania	7%
20	Zimbabwe	31%	1,663,500	Joint 16	Congo	6%
21	Equatorial Guinea	30%	78,000	Joint 16	Gabon	6%
22	Kenya	26%	4,811,000	Joint 16	Kenya	6%
23	Togo	25%	749,000	Joint 16	Togo	6%
Joint 24	Gabon	22%	175,500	Joint 17	Ghana	5%
Joint 24	Guinea-Bissau	22%	188,000	Joint 17	Sao Tome & Principe	5%
25	Ghana	21%	2,788,000	18	Zimbabwe	4%
26	Burundi	20%	1,092,000	Joint 19	Burundi	3%
27	Lesotho	19%	249,000	Joint 19	Cape Verde	3%
28	Cape Verde	18%	54,500	Joint 19	Morocco	3%
29	Egypt	17%	7,618,000	Joint 20	Djibouti	2%
30	Morocco	16%	3,031,500	Joint 20	Egypt	2%
31	Namibia	9%	265,000	Joint 20	Lesotho	2%
32	Rwanda	8%	1,387,000	Joint 20	Namibia	2%
33	Swaziland	7%	149,500	Joint 21	Rwanda	1%
34	South Africa	6%	4,789,000	Joint 21	South Africa	1%
35	Djibouti	5%	89,500	Joint 21	Swaziland	1%
Joint 36	Algeria	2%	3,195,500		Algeria	N/Av
Joint 36	Tunisia	2%	846,000		Angola	N/Av
	Angola	N/Av			Botswana	N/Av
	Botswana	N/Av			Libya	N/Av
	Libya	N/Av			Mauritius	N/Av
	Mauritius	N/Av			Seychelles	N/Av
	Seychelles	N/Av			Tunisia	N/Av

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2015 Africa Factsheet on Underage/Child & Forced ‘Marriage’ – Implications For Health, Governance, Population, Economy & Human Rights

Summary Research Findings & Trends At A Glance

Overall, the scorecard and research findings highlight – that:

- 20 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;
 - 15 years of Millennium Development Goals;
 - **15 years after entering into force of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;**
 - 10 years after the entering into force of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights - on the Rights of Women in Africa;
 - 5 years into the AU African Women’s Decade 2010-2020
 - And in 2015 – the AU “*Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development In Africa*”
- ✘ Underage / Child / Forced ‘Marriage’ – **A most disempowering manifestation of gender inequality, and brutal reflection on the status of girl children and women** - has not been eradicated in Africa – is currently at **epidemic proportions**, is **institutionalised**, and in majority of African countries is **state endorsed or tolerated by ‘law’, ‘culture’ or ‘tradition’**.
 - ✘ The everyday lives of girl children subjected to underage child and forced ‘marriage’ demonstrates that - These are not genuine marriages in any sense of the word – but rather a **pseudo legal institutionalized way for men that have low regard for status of girl children to:**
 - ✘ Acquire underage girl children for sexual abuse, exploitation and child bearing, and as
 - ✘ Domestic house servants – with no rights and legal protection.

Negative Multisectoral Implications For: Girls/Women’s Human Rights; Health; Human Development; Governance; Population; & Economy

- ✘ **Negative Impact on Girls & Women’s Human Rights:** Disturbingly for gender equality, women’s health, human security and development – *the widespread abuse of tens of millions of girl children through underage/child/forced ‘marriage’ has resulted in them being negatively socialised and indoctrinated to accept and justify violence* against (themselves) as normal and acceptable – thereby undermining or even reversing girls/women’s human rights.
- ✘ **Danger To Citizenship & Constitutional Status:** This institutionalised indoctrination and socialisation of tens of millions of African girls and women to accept violence against themselves as normal – **represents great danger to women’s citizenship, constitutional status – by creating a social sub-category of tens of millions of girls and women indoctrinated to surrender their equality, and right to social justice.**
- ✘ **Consequently there are 25 African countries where over half (50% or more) of Girls and Women 15-49 years old accept or justify gender based violence as normal:** *Guinea* 92%; *Mali* 87%; *Central African Republic* 80%; *South Sudan* 79%; *D.R. Congo* 76%; *Somalia* 76%; *Gambia* 75%; *Congo* 73%; *Burundi* 73%; *Sierra Leone* 73%; *Algeria* 68%; *Ethiopia* 68%; *Morocco* 64%; *Chad* 62%; *Zambia* 62%; *Niger* 60%; *Senegal* 60%; *Liberia* 59%; *Uganda* 58%; *Rwanda* 56%; *Tanzania* 54%; *Kenya* 53%; *Equatorial Guinea* 53%; *Eritrea* 51%; and *Gabon* 50%.
- ✘ **Danger To Africa’s Sustainable Development:** Epidemic levels of sexual abuse and violence against girl children *through underage/child/forced ‘marriage’ is undermining African and global development goals* for Girl Child Education; HIV, Reproductive, Sexual, Maternal - & Child - Health, Cervical Cancer, and Mental Health of Women amongst other health and development issues

- ✘ **Entrenching Feminisation of Poverty / Danger To Africa's Poverty Reduction Goals:** By creating an underclass of tens of millions of girls/women that are economically dependent on their abusers - underage/child/forced 'marriage' – is deepening, entrenching and normalising the feminisation of poverty in Africa thereby making it impossible for the continent to sustainably end poverty.
- ✘ **Danger To Education, Economic Empowerment And Economic Development** – By creating an underclass of tens of millions of girls/women that are denied education, and severely truncated ability for employment or business opportunity - underage/child/forced 'marriage' is not only hampering economic empowerment of women, but in effect undermining sustainable economic development of Africa
- ✘ **Danger To Political Participation & Representation** – By creating an underclass of tens of millions of girls/women denied fundamental freedoms of expression, movement and association, - underage/child/forced 'marriage' is excluding millions of girls and women from Political Participation and Representation – and potentially altering Africa's political landscape to be the most gender negative globally.
- ✘ **Underage/Child/Forced 'Marriage' Normalises Community Based Trafficking, Sexual Abuse & Exploitation Of Girl Children** - By cloaking it in the pseudo legality of 'marriage', parental 'consent' and 'culture' and 'tradition'.
- ✘ **Underage/Child/Forced 'Marriage' Normalises What Is Effectively Domestic Enslavement & Economic Exploitation Of Girl Children** - By cloaking it in the pseudo legality of 'marriage', parental 'consent' and 'culture' and 'tradition'.
- ✘ **Negative Impact on Population, Governance, Peace & Security:** *Underage/child/forced 'marriage' (where girls survive maternal mortality and fistula etc) – leads to skyrocketing fertility rates of between 5 to 8 children per woman - triggering population growth that outstrips resources. In many African countries between 16.7 million (Niger) to 92.9 million youth (Nigeria) per country will be added to populations – By 2030 - in just the next 15 years, placing immense pressure on water, food, housing, schools, transport, jobs and overall resource management, governance, peace and security.*
- ✘ **Overall Destructive Impact On Childhood & Adolescent Development:** - Overall Underage/child/forced 'marriage' destroys the childhood and adolescence of girl children subjecting them to life long trauma and mental health, and then denies them an opportunity for rehabilitation by creating a pseudo legal framework for lifelong abuse and exploitation.

Country Trends & Patterns In Underage / Child / Forced 'Marriage' – Under 18 Years

- ✘ From the countries for which data is available there are **8 African countries in which over half - between 50% to 76% of girls under 18 years are subjected to abuse of underage / child / forced 'marriage'**: Niger 76%; Central African Republic 68%; Chad 68%; Mali 55%; Guinea 52%; Burkina Faso 52%; South Sudan 52%; Malawi 50%.
- ✘ **The African countries with 10 joint highest percentage of girls under 18 years subjected to abuse of underage/child/forced 'marriage' are:** Niger 76%; Central African Republic 68%; Chad 68%; Mali 55%; Burkina Faso 52%; Guinea 52%; South Sudan 52%; Malawi 50%; Mozambique 48%; Somalia 45%; Sierra Leone 44%; Nigeria 43%; and Zambia 42%.
- ✘ **There are 34 African countries where over a quarter of girls under 18 years are subjected to abuse of underage/child/forced 'marriage'**: Niger 76%; Central African Republic 68%; Chad 68%; Mali 55%; Burkina Faso 52%; Guinea 52%; South Sudan 52%; Malawi 50%; Mozambique 48%; Somalia 45%; Sierra Leone 44%; Nigeria 43%; and Zambia 42%; Ethiopia 41%; Eritrea 41%; Madagascar 41%; Uganda 40%; Democratic Rep of Congo 39%; Cameroon 38%; Liberia 38%; Tanzania 37%; Gambia 36%; Mauritania 34%; Sao Tome & Principe 34%; Congo 33%; Cote d'Ivoire 33%; Senegal 33%; Sudan 33%; Benin 32%; Comoros 32%; Zimbabwe 31%; Equatorial Guinea 30%; Kenya 26%; Togo 25%.
- ✘ **African countries dominate the global joint top 10 of countries with highest underage/child/ forced 'marriage' under 18 years:** Niger 76%; Central African Rep. 68%; Chad 68%; **Bangladesh 65%**; Mali 55%; Burkina Faso 52%; Guinea 52%; South Sudan 52%; Malawi 50%; Mozambique 48%; Somalia 45%; **India 47%**; Sierra Leone 44%; Nigeria 43%; Zambia 42%.

Country Trends & Patterns In Underage / Child / Forced ‘Marriage’ – Under 15 Years

- ✖ From the countries for which data is available there are **3 African countries in which over a quarter - between 28% to 29% of girls under 15 years are subjected to abuse of underage / child / forced ‘marriage’** - Central African Republic 29%; Chad 29%; Niger 28%;
- ✖ **The African countries with 10 joint highest percentage of girls under 15 years subjected to abuse of underage/child/forced ‘marriage’ are:** Central African Republic 29%; Chad 29%; Niger 28%; Guinea 21%; Sierra Leone 18%; Nigeria 17%; Ethiopia 16%; Mali 15%; Mauritania 14%; Mozambique 14%; Cameroon 13%; Eritrea 13%; Madagascar 12%; Malawi 12%; Senegal 12%.
- ✖ **The African countries where over 10% of girls under 15 years subjected to abuse of underage/child/forced ‘marriage’ are:** Central African Republic 29%; Chad 29%; Niger 28%; Guinea 21%; Sierra Leone 18%; Nigeria 17%; Ethiopia 16%; Mali 15%; Mauritania 14%; Mozambique 14%; Cameroon 13%; Eritrea 13%; Madagascar 12%; Malawi 12%; Senegal 12%; Liberia 11%; Benin 11%; Burkina Faso 10%; Cote d’Ivoire 10%; Uganda 10%; Comoros 10%.
- ✖ **African countries dominate the global joint top 10 of countries with highest underage / child / forced ‘marriage’ under 15 years:** **Bangladesh 29%**; Central African Republic 29%; Chad 29%; Niger 28%; Guinea 21%; **India 18%**; Sierra Leone 18%; Nigeria 17%; Ethiopia 16%; **Afghanistan 15%**; Mali 15%; Mauritania 14%; Mozambique 14%; Cameroon 13%; Eritrea 13%; **Dominican Republic 12%**; Madagascar 12%; Malawi 12%; Senegal 12%; **Yemen 12%**

Key Recommendations

End All Official / Development Agency / Government Classification Of Minor’s/Girl Children Under 18 Years Of Age As Women Or Adults

- ✓ To improve global / regional / national and multisectoral understanding and implementation of development goals – undermined by abuse and exploitation of girl children – especially those relating to girls and women’s health, human development and security, and gender equality – All ***UN agencies, development partners and governments should immediately / before commencement of the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals end classification of minors or girls under the age of 18 as ‘women’ or ‘adult women’***, and adopt a unified and more appropriate classification of - “girl children”, “adolescent girls”, or “girls under the age of 18 years”.

Establishment Of / Investment In Child Protection Services At All Level’s Of Governance

- ✓ Establishment – with policy and budget support - in all African countries of specific national and community based emergency reporting phone numbers, safe houses, and child protection services / law enforcement protection - aimed at protecting girl children from abuse, exploitation and negative cultural practices - especially forced and underage ‘marriages’, domestic and international trafficking and abuse.

Law Enforcement Training & Reform On Gender Equality & Child Protection At National & Local Levels

- ✓ Ensuring (for all serving law enforcement officers) law enforcement training / education and reform on gender equality and women’s rights – Institutionalising same in curriculum of all law enforcement training institutions; establishment of specialised gender based violence units with minimum 50% female composition; and overall recruitment of more women officers and leadership reflective of population balance;

Constitutional, Citizenship, Legislative & Justice Sector Review

- ✓ Ensuring – with policy and budget support - comprehensive measurable constitutional, citizenship, legislative and justice sector review – aimed at eliminating all enshrined forms of institutionalised, and ‘legalised’ discrimination against girls and women;
- ✓ Enactment and enforcement of appropriate legislation to increase minimum age of marriage for girls to 18, and raise public awareness about underage /child / forced ‘marriage’ as a violation of girls’ human rights;

National & Local Launch Of Public Awareness & Enlightenment Campaigns

- ✓ Long term and well funded awareness campaigns – at all levels of governance - to address the root causes of underage/child/forced ‘marriage’, including gender discrimination, low value of girls, poverty, or religious and cultural justifications.
- ✓ Engaging and Mobilising men, boys, parents, leaders and champions to change harmful social ‘norms’, promote girls rights and create opportunities for them.

Improved Investment In Girl Child Education

- ✓ Improve investment for access to universal quality primary and secondary education for all girls, ensuring girl friendly schools, and that gender gaps in schooling are eliminated;

Improved Investment In Civil Registration

- ✓ Improved Investment In Civil Registration for population based development planning - Including registration of all births; and ensuring birth certificates are the basis of legal marriages.

Support For Victims Of Underage/Child/Forced ‘Marriage’

- ✓ Policy and budget enabled support for girls/women who are already victims of Underage/Child/Forced ‘Marriage’ by providing them with: options of vocational training or flexible education through special schools, evening or adult schools; sexual and reproductive health services; and recourse from violence in the home.

Special African Commission For Promotion Of Girls And Women’s Human Security & Development; Gender Equality & Women’s Rights

- ✓ At the Africa / global level, **formation of a special African Commission for Promotion of Girls and Women’s Human Security and Development; Gender Equality and Women’s Rights** – with power to issue independent annual or bi-annual reports to be presented to AU Summits; and with actionable recommendations implemented through Ministers of Justice, Gender, Youth, Education, Health, and Economic Development; and Parliaments.

Establishment / Strengthening - With Policy & Budget Support - Of Independent National Gender Equality & Women’s Rights Commissions – For Domestication Implementation Of African Charter On Rights & Welfare Of The Child; & Protocol To African Charter - On The Rights Of Women In Africa, & Related Conventions.

- ✓ **Urgent formation as part of implementation of Post 2015 Development Goals - Independent National Gender Equality and Women’s Rights Commissions supported by legislation and budget** (similar to National AIDS Commissions established in recognition of the HIV & AIDS epidemic). **A key role of the Commissions will be to ensure full domestication, promotion and implementation of The African Charter on Rights & Welfare of the Child States** – in force since 1999; and **Protocol to the African Charter On Human and Peoples' Rights On the Rights of Women In Africa** – in force since 2005 – and currently signed and ratified by 36 African countries; the Beijing Platform for Action; and related conventions.
- ✓ Where such Commissions may already exist their mandate should be strengthened to include full domestic implementation of **The African Charter on Rights & Welfare of the Child and the Protocol to the African Charter On Human and Peoples' Rights On the Rights of Women In Africa** – *including full participation of representatives of independent women’s and child rights organisations* – and enabling legislation and budgets to monitor, investigate, educate, promote, protect, report and rectify policy and practice undermining gender equality in government, private sector, and the community.

In Particular The Mandate Should Cover Domestication / National Implementation Of Following Provisions Of African Charter On Rights & Welfare Of The Child

Article 2: Definition of a Child

For title purposes of this Charter, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years.

Article 4: Best Interests of the Child

1. In all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration.

Article 11: Education

1. Every child shall have the right to an education.

2. The education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The promotion and development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

3. States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures with a view to achieving the full realization of this right and shall in particular:

(d) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates;

(e) Take special measures in respect of female, gifted and disadvantaged children, to ensure equal access to education for all sections of the community.

Article 14: Health and Health Services

1. Every child shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health.

2. States Parties to the present Charter shall undertake to pursue the full implementation of this right and in particular shall take measures:

(a) To reduce infant and child mortality rate;

Article 15: Child Labor

1. Every child shall be protected from all forms of economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development.

Article 16: Protection Against Child Abuse and Torture

1. States Parties to the present Charter shall take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse...

Article 21: Protection against Harmful Social and Cultural Practices

1. States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child and in particular:

(a) Those customs and practices prejudicial to the health or life of the child;

(b) Those customs and practices discriminatory to the child on the grounds of sex or other status.

2. Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory.

Article 27: Sexual Exploitation

1. States Parties to the present Charter shall undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse...

Article 29: Sale, Trafficking and Abduction

States Parties to the present Charter shall take appropriate measures to prevent:

(a) The abduction, the sale of, or traffic of children for any purpose or in any form, by any person including parents or legal guardians of the child...

Main sources for study summarized in publication: A Statistical Snapshot Of Violence Against Adolescent Girls (UNICEF 2014); Africa, Health, Human & Social Development Information Service (Afri-Dev.Info); Ending Child Marriage Progress And Reports UNICEF 2014; Hidden In Plain Sight, A Statistical Analysis Of Violence Against Children UNICEF Report – 2014; Marrying Too Young, UNFPA 2012; State Of The Worlds Children 2014 And 2015; State Of The Worlds Population 2014; UNICEF Global Databases, 2014, Based On Demographic And Health Surveys (DHS); Global School-Based Student Health Surveys (GSHS); Health Behaviour In School-Aged Children (HBSC) Study; Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS); United Nations, Department Of Economic And Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects - 2012 Revision; World Health Organisation Factsheet No 239 2014; WHO Global And Regional Estimates Of Violence Against Women 2013; WHO Global Status Report On Violence Prevention 2014..

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