

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

CHILD MARRIAGE SOUTH SUDAN

Photographs by Brent Stirton/Reportage by Getty Images for Human Rights Watch



Helen, 16, stands with her husband Jade, 50, outside their home in a village near Juba. Helen married at 15 and said she would have chosen school over marriage, but her family was unable to afford school fees. She was in labor for five days before having a cesarean section. Her son is now 8 months old. *Kansuk, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.*



SUMMARY



I did not know him before. I did not love him. I told my family, “I don’t want this man.” My people said, “This old man can feed us, you will marry him.”

— Atong G., 16, forced to marry a 50-year-old man in July 2011

Akech B. loved to study and dreamed of becoming a nurse. But when she was 14, her uncle who was raising her, told her she was too old for school. He forced her to leave school and told her that she had to marry a man whom Akech described as old, gray-haired, and married to another woman with whom he had several children.

Akech begged her uncle to allow her to continue her education. He refused. “Girls are born so that people can eat. All I want is to get my dowry,” he told her. The man paid 75 cows for Akech, which signified that the marriage had taken place. She tried to resist, but her male cousins beat her severely, accused her of dishonoring her family, and forced her to go to the man’s house.

Akech fled and hid with a friend. Her uncle found her and took her to prison, where he told officials that she had run away from her husband and needed to be taught a lesson. They imprisoned her for a night. When her cousins came for her they beat her so badly that she could hardly walk. Then they took her back to her husband.

After that, Akech felt that she had no choice, but to stay.

South Sudanese women face myriad hardships and obstacles in their daily lives, including high levels of poverty, low levels of literacy, pronounced gender gaps in education, and the highest maternal mortality rate in the world—estimated at 2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births.

For women and girls like Akech, these hardships are all too often compounded by a serious human rights violation: child marriage. Close to half (48 percent) of South Sudanese girls between 15 and 19 are married, according to the 2006 Sudan Household Health Survey. Some are as young as 12 when they are married.

Many South Sudanese communities see child marriage as being in the best interests of girls and their families, and an important way for families to access much-needed resources, such as cattle, money, and other gifts via the traditional practice of transferring wealth through the payment of dowries. It is also viewed as a way to protect girls from pre-marital sex and unwanted pregnancy that undermines family honor and decreases the amount of dowry a family may receive. For some girls, marriage may also be the only way to escape poverty or violence in the home.

Much of the research on child marriage in South Sudan has focused on the physical impact it has on girls' and women's bodies. This report examines this problem, and reinforces studies by experts and women's rights groups in South Sudan that indicate that child marriage has a significant negative impact on women and girl's realization of key human rights, including their rights to health and education, physical integrity and the right to marry only when they are able and willing to give their free consent. Based on extensive interviews with 87 girls and women in three states

between March and October 2012—and with government officials, traditional leaders, health care workers, legal and women's rights experts, teachers, prison officials, and NGO, UN, and donor representatives—this report describes the severe consequences of this practice, and the risks that women and girls face when they resist or try to leave these marriages. It also examines the near total lack of protection for victims of child marriage and the many obstacles they face in attempting to find redress.

South Sudan has taken some action since it gained autonomy from Sudan in 2005 and independence in 2011, to address women's rights. These include calls by President Salva Kiir Mayardit for women to participate in all spheres of life and the elimination of harmful traditions that limit their progress, and promises by the government and its international development partners to make gender equality a cornerstone of the country's development agenda.

Some of these steps include actions to tackle child marriage: provisions in the Transitional Constitution which entered into force at South Sudan's independence in 2011—guaranteeing women and girls the right to consent to marriage; penal code provisions criminalizing “kidnapping or abducting a woman to compel her to get married”; and the 2008 Child Act provisions that protect children under 18 from early and forced marriages and guarantee them the right to non-discrimination, health, education, life, survival and development, an opinion, and protection from torture, degrading treatment, and abuse. Many girls and women also benefit from an alternative education system that allows pregnant girls and mothers and individuals who have not had access to formal education or who have dropped out, to continue school.

However, the report finds that these measures are not enough, and are often stymied by a range of problems and limitations. These include gaps in existing laws, failure to understand and implement existing policies and legislation, poor coordination among government ministries responsible for protecting children from abuse, and an absence of guidelines about how they should address child marriage cases. Systemic problems in the justice system, such as lack of infrastructure, resources, and well-trained personnel, compound the inability of women and girls to obtain justice for gender-based crimes, including child and forced marriages, or to seek redress against those who have forced them to marry without their consent.

There are also gaps in the Transitional Constitution, Penal Code, and Child Act related to this harmful practice—including no minimum age of marriage—and no systematic or comprehensive programs to address the root causes of child marriage at the community level. The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare has drafted a Gender Policy that would go some way to addressing many of these gaps, and proposes developing a National Plan of Action, new laws to tackle sexual and gender based violence, and establishing ‘safe centres’ for trauma counseling of victims. However, it remains largely unimplemented at time of writing.

Many girls and women are not aware of their rights under the law to seek help, or do not know where to look for assistance other than their own families or community elders, who often fail them. The absence of statutory family legislation means that most matters relating to marriage, divorce, child custody, maintenance payments and domestic violence are handled by customary courts that frequently discriminate against women and girls. Widespread discriminatory attitudes that see

women as second class citizens perpetuate the practice. Moreover South Sudan does not have sufficient or specialized safe spaces to offer protection to victims of forced marriage and other gender-related abuses.

As a result of these failures and inadequacies, many women and girls continue to struggle with the often devastating and long-lasting consequences of child marriage. Girls who marry young are removed from school, denying them an education needed to provide for themselves and their families. Reproductive health studies show that young women face greater risks in pregnancy and child birth than older women, including life-threatening obstructed labour due to their smaller pelvises and immature bodies—problems accentuated by South Sudan’s limited prenatal and postnatal healthcare services. Because early marriage limits young married girls’ knowledge and skills, resources, social support networks, mobility and autonomy, they often have little power in relation to their husband or his family, including pressing for family planning and contraception.

Today, there are a number of small ongoing initiatives implemented or funded by local and international organizations, donors and the government that address aspects of child marriage. However, these efforts are sporadic, uncoordinated, and limited in scope.

Fortunately, child marriage is an area where concrete reforms are possible, even considering the current challenges facing the new country. Moreover, it is an area in which reforms are vital because the practice constrains the social, educational, health, security, and economic progress of women and girls, their families, and their communities. As a result, failure to combat

child marriage is likely to have serious implications for the future development of South Sudan.

The government of South Sudan should take immediate and long-term steps to protect girls from child and forced marriage and ensure the fulfillment of their human rights. While resource constraints are a major concern, some reforms can be made without a large investment, and these should be implemented quickly. Others that may be costly are crucial components of ensuring that the government meets its obligations to uphold rather than violate girls' and women's human rights.

The government, with the support of South Sudan's development partners, should:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive national action plan to prevent and address the consequences of child marriage;
- Develop and implement guidelines on how national and state level government ministries and agencies should address child marriage cases;
- Conduct training for relevant government and law enforcement officials about the legal rights of girls under the Child Act, particularly their right to be protected from child marriage;
- Carry out a nationwide awareness-raising campaign to inform the public about the harms caused by child marriage;
- Work toward comprehensive reform of South Sudan's laws on marriage, separation, divorce, and related matters; and
- Take programmatic and policy measures to ensure that girls and women who seek help from authorities for forced marriages can get it.



Mary eloped with her husband when she was 14. Her husband beat her severely and stabbed her for talking to another boy. As a result, she lost the use of her right hand. When her husband took her to the police station and accused her of adultery, the police caned her as punishment. Her husband was never charged for assaulting her. Mary now lives with her uncle.
Juba, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.



A marriage ceremony in Baidit, Jonglei State. In South Sudan 48 percent of girls between 15 and 19 are married. Marriage shapes the experiences, status, and security of South Sudanese women, and is at the center of many violations of their rights.
Baidit, Jonglei State, February 2013.



DOWRY



Families reach marriage agreements between themselves and choose marriage partners without the consent or even knowledge of girls. They have an interest in marrying off their girls as early as possible, and to the highest bidder, since dowry—unlike in many other countries—is paid by the groom and his family to the girl’s family and can include cattle, money, and other gifts.

Dowry also makes divorce and separation more difficult for women. Many women forfeit all their belongings if they separate or divorce. Under many South Sudanese customary law systems, divorce is not widely accepted and only possible when the dowry is repaid to the husband’s family—a requirement that can create tensions, especially since the dowry is often shared amongst the bride’s extended family.

Cattle rest in the countryside close to Bor. In pastoralist communities, dowry is largely paid in cattle, while agriculturalist communities combine money with cattle or other livestock. Customary practices attach great social and economic importance to dowry payment, and a husband's consequent rights over his wife.
Bor, Jonglei State, February 2013.





A pregnant student stands in front of a chalkboard at Juba Day Secondary School. The school administration does not permit female students who become pregnant to remain in regular classes. But the teachers union offers evening sessions that pregnant girls and young mothers can attend in order to continue their education. Juba, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.



EDUCATION



Child marriage frequently interrupts girls' education or deprives them of it altogether. Most of the girls and women interviewed—43 out of 61— who had attended school, left after three to five years of primary education.

The Ministry of Education told Human Rights Watch that they do not collect data on the number of girls who drop out of school to get married or due to pregnancy. However, the director general for education in Western Equatoria State said that despite the lack of statistics, “from what we see in schools, drop-out rates due to marriage and pregnancy are very high.”

Some parents keep girls out of school, especially after they have reached puberty, for fear that schooling may expose them to risks of premarital sex and pregnancy that would decrease their chances of getting married or fetching a high dowry upon marriage.

Human Rights Watch interviewed 15 girls who were married and in school attending alternative education programs. However, the majority of girls with whom we spoke had dropped out of school and said it was difficult to continue school after marriage or becoming pregnant. Some of the reasons given by girls were lack of money to pay school fees, lack of child care and unavailability of adult classes, or the need to do chores. Others said that their husbands would not allow them to continue school after marriage alleging that they were unfaithful if they insisted on going to school.

“My father refused me to go to school. He said it is a waste of money to educate a girl. He said marriage will bring me respect in the community. Now I have grown up and I know that this is not true. I cannot get work to support my children and I see girls who have some education can get jobs.”
— Mary K., Yambio County



Sister Felicita Humwara, the head of history and religious studies at Juba Day Secondary School, offers support and encouragement to young mothers who have returned to school after having children. Juba, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.







Left: Annette, 15, teaches her sister in Kajo Keji. Annette married at 14 and miscarried in her first year of marriage. While Annette's husband said she could go to school when he could afford to send her, he also wants children, which will add to the couple's financial burden and make her return to school difficult.
Kajo Keji, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.

Below: The Hon. Rachel Anok Omot Obal, Jonglei State's minister of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare, is a vocal opponent of early marriage. She is working to create new schools and dormitories to broaden opportunities for girls to obtain education.
Bor, Jonglei State, February 2013.







A girl speaks to fellow boy students at Juba Day Secondary School. In South Sudan, only 30 percent of secondary school students are female. Promoting girls' education, especially through the secondary level, is one key strategy for reducing early marriage.
Juba, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.

JUSTICE

Girls and women in South Sudan have few rights in their homes and in marriage, and face many risks when they resist or try to leave forced marriages.


Many of the girls interviewed by Human Rights Watch said they had tried to reason with their families when faced with imminent marriage to someone they did not wish to marry. When these efforts failed—and they did in most cases—many had no choice but to get married. Some women and girls try at great personal risk to avoid forced and early marriages. Some seek help from their families, traditional authorities, or elders. Others flee to religious leaders or human rights organizations, or look for assistance from government officials and the police. Even if they manage to flee, they face many hurdles to getting protection and accessing justice, and rarely get the help they need.

There are many weaknesses in the administration of justice in South Sudan, such as lack of infrastructure, resources, adequate laws, and well-trained personnel. Generally, these weaknesses affect women’s ability to obtain justice for gender-based crimes, including forced marriages. Statutory courts are often inaccessible; they are far away and women lack legal counsel to help them navigate the system, or the necessary protection to lodge complaints. As early and forced marriages are accepted in many South Sudan traditions and cultures, customary courts offer limited hope for escape. With both statutory and customary courts staffed almost entirely by men, women encounter discrimination when seeking justice in either forum.

Akuot’s father died when she was a young child. Now 16, her uncle tried to force her into marriage, despite the fact that both she and her mother protested. Akuot resisted the marriage and ran away, determined to continue her education. Her uncle and her male cousins caught her, dragged her back to their village, and beat her for three days while keeping her locked inside without food or water. Akuot’s aunt, who tried to intervene, was beaten so badly that she suffered permanent and disabling injuries. Akuot received help from a nongovernmental organization (NGO), but many women and girls are not aware of their rights, or do not know where to look for assistance outside of their families or community elders, who often fail them. Akuot is back in school, and living with her mother and siblings in a house that the NGO and the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare built for them. *Bor, Jonglei State, February 2013.*







Sarah (not her real name), now 16, ran away from her family two years ago when her father tried to force her into marriage. She is in the care of an NGO that has served as an ad-hoc shelter for girls fleeing forced marriage. Her family tried to force Sarah to return home and marry, but she was protected by the NGO. Girls who resist forced marriages may face physical, verbal, and psychological violence from their families or husbands and are often unsafe at home.
Juba, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.





Backpacks hang on the wall of a nongovernmental organization that serves as an ad-hoc shelter for girls fleeing forced marriage. South Sudan has no shelters designed to assist survivors of gender-based violence. Lack of shelters or safe spaces where girls can seek help and protection when at risk of forced marriage—or when they run away from them—is a key barrier to effectively responding to forced marriages and domestic violence generally. *Juba, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.*

HEALTH

Early marriage contributes to violations of the right to health. It puts girls at greater risk of dying or ill-health as a result of early pregnancy and childbirth. Their children also face higher mortality rates. These increased risks are not only related to age, but also to girls' low levels of education, low social and economic status, and lack of access to health related information and services.

Obstetric Fistula

Early marriage is a major risk factor for fistula development—a devastating childbirth injury that leaves its victims with urine and/or fecal incontinence that causes infection, pain, and bad smell, and triggers stigma and the breakdown of marriages, loss of employment, and challenges in family and community life.

The risk of obstetric fistula is heightened by young married girls' poor socio-economic status, and lack of education and access to appropriate reproductive and maternal health care. However, studies show that physical immaturity is the key risk for girls under 15 because their pelvises are not fully developed and thus susceptible to obstructed labor—the main cause of fistula.



A young woman recovers after giving birth to twins in Bor Hospital. She was married at the age of 12 and had her first child at the age of 15, enduring a protracted five-day labor. She is now 20 and these are her 4th and 5th children. Bor, Jonglei State, February 2013.





Above: The maternity ward in Bor Hospital. South Sudanese women face the highest maternal mortality rate in the world—estimated at 2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births.
Bor, Jonglei State, February 2013.

Rights: A young woman sits in her hospital bed after undergoing surgery for obstetric fistula. Girls and young women face greater risks in pregnancy and childbirth, including life-threatening obstructed labor due to their smaller pelvises and immature bodies—problems accentuated by South Sudan’s limited prenatal and postnatal healthcare services.
Juba, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.





RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH SUDAN

- Declare zero tolerance on child marriage, and publicly and forcefully condemn acts of violence against girls and women who resist child marriages.
- Publicly support a national action plan to end child marriage.
- Publicly support efforts to address the issue of dowry and its negative impact on the rights of girls and women in South Sudan. Call for initiatives to encourage ethnic communities to regulate dowry through consultation with all stakeholders, including women and girls.
- Call on the national legislature to decriminalize all consensual adult sex.

TO THE MINISTRY OF GENDER, CHILD AND SOCIAL WELFARE

On a National Action Plan to End Child Marriage

- Develop and implement a national action plan to prevent and end child marriage, in accordance with international good practices. Ensure there is broad public participation in the development of the plan by relevant government ministries and bodies including the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of General Education and Instruction, and the Judiciary. The South Sudan Human Rights Commission, legislative bodies, NGOs, and UN and donor agencies should also participate in the development of the action plan.
- Work with the National Legislative Assembly to ensure that appropriate funding is allocated in the annual national budget to implement the national action plan to end child marriage once it is developed.

On Improving Coordination, Investigation, and Response to Child Marriage Cases

- Develop and implement guidelines on how national and state level government ministries should address child marriage cases. The guidelines should include the following information: government ministries, departments and agencies concerned, their responsibility, officials responsible for handling cases, remedies available, and referral procedures within

government structures. Relevant government ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the judiciary, and the SSHRC and NGOs should also participate in the development of these guidelines.

- Develop simple procedures (in the form of a poster or similar communication tools), and establish mechanisms (such as help lines) for how girls, families, or concerned individuals can report child marriage cases and seek help. The guidelines referred to above should explain the reporting procedures, authorities responsible for handling the cases, available remedies and protection measures, and appeal procedures. Inform the public about these guidelines.
- Issue regulations on the Child Act, specifying the mandate of each government ministry or agency particularly regarding the protection of children from child marriage.
- Conduct training for relevant government officials about the legal rights of girls under the Child Act, particularly their right to be protected from child marriage.

On Protection of Girls Seeking Help from Forced Marriage and Domestic Violence

- Support and advocate for the establishment of safe spaces, such as shelters, for girls threatened by early and forced marriages or other forms of domestic violence. Once established, work with the Ministries of Justice and Interior to ensure protection of these shelters, and support outreach programs that advise women and girls about the existence of shelters, and how they can access them.
- Develop and implement measures to protect girls who seek help from forced marriages, including those who bring charges against their families for forced marriage. Do this together with relevant government ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, and the judiciary. NGOs should also participate. Create public awareness about the availability of these protection measures.

On Increasing Awareness about Child Marriage in Communities

- Carry out a nation-wide awareness-raising campaign to inform the public about child marriage. Involve girls and women, relevant government ministries, traditional and religious leaders, and NGOs in the campaign. Include information on:
 - The harms the practice causes and the benefits of delayed marriage and childbearing;
 - Information about protection measures, legal remedies, and medical and psycho-social care available to girls and women; and
 - Consequences for perpetrators.
- Encourage girls and the public to report child marriage cases.

TO THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Work toward comprehensive reform of South Sudan’s laws on marriage, separation, divorce, and related matters, in collaboration with relevant government ministries and agencies, the National Legislative Assembly, experts, and NGOs and civil society groups working on women’s rights. In particular:

On Lack of Comprehensive Family Legislation

- Enact legislation that:
 - Clearly sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years of age for both spouses;
 - Clearly establishes the requirement for full and free consent of both partners to a marriage;
 - Prohibits forced marriage and related harmful practices including bride kidnapping, girl-child compensation, marriage as dispute settlement or debt payment, polygamy, and wife inheritance;
 - Sets clear penalties and punishment for acts of violence against girls and women carried out as intimidation or retribution for refusal to marry; and provides for adequate legal, medical, and psycho-social services to victims of these attacks;
 - Grants the same legal status to parties in customary marriages as those in civil marriages;

- Sets clear criteria for child custody and maintenance, and fully affirms women’s rights to child custody upon separation and divorce;
- Grants women and men equal rights to apply for divorce and to a fair determination;
- Fully affirms the concept of marital property and allows for its division on an equal basis between spouses at the time of dissolution of marriage, recognizing financial and non-financial contributions made by women;
- Ensures that girls and women who are forcibly married shall have the right to press criminal charges, seek a divorce, and seek alimony;
- Sets clear penalties for anyone who intentionally forces an adult or a child to enter into a marriage;
- Ensures that girls married prior to the enactment of the new legislation have the option of terminating their marriage, and protects their rights to property, child custody, and maintenance.
- Ensures that children born to mothers under 18 shall have the same rights as children born in a legally recognized marriage;
 - Makes marriage registration compulsory.
- Once the new family law is in place, together with the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare conduct public education campaigns about the provisions of the law, aiming at raising awareness in both urban and rural areas.

On Addressing Gaps in Current Laws Governing Marriage and Related Matters

- Revise the Penal Code so that: individuals are not imprisoned for adultery; and so that it recognizes marital rape as a criminal offense, clearly stating that no marriage or other relationship shall constitute a defense to a charge of rape under the legislation. Clearly define the practice of “elopement” – considered a crime in customary courts -- to ensure criminalization when it involves non-consent or force, and decriminalization when it involves the consent of both parties.

- Together with the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare, inform girls and women about their rights to seek child maintenance from fathers of their children as per the Child Act.

On strengthening South Sudan’s Human Rights Framework to Protect Women

- Together with the relevant government ministries and the National Legislative Assembly, take the necessary steps to ensure the prompt ratification, without reservations, of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (CRC). Use these treaties as guidance in drafting the new Constitution and other laws to promote women’s rights.

TO THE JUDICIARY

- Issue judicial circulars that: instruct both statutory and customary judges that proceedings on child marriage adopt the definition of a child as anyone under the age of 18 as per the provisions of the 2008 Child Act; more broadly define, and clarify, how provisions on the “best interests of the child” as per the Child Act should be applied in practice; and clearly stipulate that the “best interests of the child” be the guiding principles in all judicial and customary court proceedings on child marriages; clarify application of provision in civil procedure act that customs governing family that are “contrary to justice, equity or good conscience” should not be applied.
- Raise awareness amongst judicial and customary courts officials of these provisions.

TO THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

- Improve training for lawyers, public prosecutors, judges, and the police on gender-based violence, including child marriages. Include information on forms of GBV, contributing factors and risks, legal protections under South Sudanese and applicable international law, and consequences for perpetrators.

- Provide regular and up-to-date trainings to law enforcement officers on the requirements of the family law once it is enacted.
- Ensure that judges, traditional authorities, and other relevant authorities report cases of child marriages.
- The Ministry of Interior should consider increasing the number of officers belonging to the Special Protection Units (SPUs) at police stations, with particular attention to increasing the number of female officers, as well as expanding the coverage of the SPUs to all police stations in South Sudan.

TO THE MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION AND INSTRUCTION

On Improving Girls’ Access to Formal and Non-formal Education

- Together with the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare, continue efforts to raise public awareness on the importance of education for girls.
- Develop retention strategies to ensure that girls who enroll in school are able to remain in school, such as incentives for families to keep girls in school and to subsidize the costs of uniforms and textbooks.
- Expand efforts to provide continuing formal education and vocational training opportunities for married girls and women. In particular, expand access to alternative education programs in all states, and inform the public about the existence of these programs.
- Together with the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare, develop and implement child care support programs to enable girls who have children to attend school.
- Improve data collection on the number of girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy or to get married.

On School-Based Human Rights Education, including Comprehensive Sexuality Education

- Integrate human rights education focusing on children’s rights into the school curriculum and include child marriage among topics discussed. Ensure that teachers are trained in its contents and allocate time to teach it.
- Make comprehensive sexuality education part of the school curriculum, and ensure that teachers are trained in its contents and allocate time to teach it.

Work with the Ministry of Health, to reach out-of-school adolescents.

TO THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

- Improve access to reproductive health services and information for all girls and women, including access to emergency obstetric care and family planning.
- Provide tailored health information to young mothers about proper nutrition and care for their health and the health of their babies.
- Raise awareness among health workers and the public on the importance of registering all births, including home deliveries.

TO THE SOUTH SUDAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

- Increase monitoring of child marriage cases. Investigate and publish reports on child marriages and gaps in protection and access to justice for victims.
- Work with NGOs and civil society organizations to:
 - Support the development of a national action plan to end child marriage, and once developed, design programs to aid its implementation.
 - Raise public awareness about the dangers of child marriages, including through holding dialogue with communities and traditional leaders about the harms of child marriage.
 - Assist girls in seeking legal remedies for forced marriage and abuse, obtaining maintenance, and in continuing their education.
 - Support the development of a comprehensive family law, and once it is passed, advocate for its implementation.

TO NGOS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- Support the development of a national action plan to end child marriage, and once developed, design programs to aid its implementation.
- Raise public awareness about the dangers of child marriages, including through holding dialogue with communities and traditional leaders about the harms of child marriage.
- Assist girls in seeking legal remedies for forced marriage and abuse, obtaining maintenance, and in

continuing their education.

- Support the development of a comprehensive family law, and once it is passed, advocate for its implementation.

TO UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES (ESPECIALLY UN WOMEN, UNFPA AND UNICEF), AND INTERNATIONAL DONORS (ESPECIALLY USAID, DFID, THE EU, AND THE JOINT DONOR TEAM)

- Make the development and implementation of a national action plan to end child marriage, a comprehensive family law, and reforms of other laws that govern marriage and related matters key issues in political engagement with the South Sudanese government.
- Fund programs to implement the national action plan once it is developed.
- Support the government of South Sudan, NGOs and civil society organizations to raise public awareness about the dangers of child marriage.
- Support the establishment of for survivors and gender-based violence, including programs to provide protection for girls who seek help from child or forced marriages.
- Ensure that donor support for justice sector reform pays specific attention to addressing discrimination against women in law and in practice.
- Design and implement programs that will empower girls and women, as well as families, economically since girls' vulnerability to child marriages and abuse stems from lack of economic opportunities for them and their families.
- Fund programs that seek to address barriers to girls' education, such as subsidies for school-related costs.
- Encourage and support provision of systematic, comprehensive sexuality education for in- and out-of-school adolescents.
- Expand support to improve access to reproductive health services and information for all girls and women, including access to emergency obstetric care and family planning.
- Support awareness campaigns on the imperative to register births and marriages.

Develop a coordinated mechanism for different countries to take steps to protect, including by accepting for relocation, a small number of girls who cannot safely remain in South Sudan due to the threat of forced marriage.





A young mother who is continuing her education gives her 4-year-old daughter a bath at home. South Sudan has a return to school policy that allows pregnant girls and mothers to continue school, and many girls and women benefit from an alternative education system for individuals who have no access to formal education or who have dropped out of school. Juba, Central Equatoria State, February 2013.

A young, unmarried girl stands amid a herd of cattle outside Bor, the capital of Jonglei State. Cattle carry significant social, economic, and cultural importance for South Sudan's pastoralist ethnic groups, which use cows for the payment of dowry— a key driver of child marriage.
Bor, Jonglei State, February 2013.

