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Child Brides

Stolen Lives
Facilitator's Guide

*"An inspiring story of the struggles and hopes of young girls
around the world who are forced into early marriage."*

with Maria Hinojosa, Senior Correspondent, NOW on PBS



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Supporting Materials for NOW on PBS One-Hour Special Broadcast on Child Marriage

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INTRODUCTION FOR FACILITATORS

Objectives

- Give context to PBS/NOW Special Broadcast: “Child Brides: Stolen Lives”
- Acquire additional information about the issue of child marriage
- Explore issues of gender discrimination
- Learn about community-based solutions
- Understand the role of education
- Gain confidence to share information and building leadership
- Devise ways of making a difference

The NOW Facilitator’s Guide was developed to provide a framework for engaging students in the issues surrounding Child Marriage. As a companion piece, the Action Kit serves as a resource to help high school students absorb the information in the film, reflect on the topic presented, develop a sense of global responsibility, and engage in group activities.

Child marriage is a global issue with special resonance for young people touching on themes of personal freedom, life expectations, discrimination, and gender violence. Together, the Facilitator’s Guide and Action Kit will enable deeper understanding in the subject and instill confidence in students to study the issue, spread awareness and join advocacy campaigns in your communities and around the world.

This Guide has been designed for high school students and can be employed in social studies or history classes, and extra-curricular settings. The Guide assumes familiarity with human rights, development issues and the United Nations system. Included you will find a glossary and below you will find links for additional information.

The subject of child marriage should be approached with caution. Discussions may touch on such sensitive topics as sexual violence, coercion and risky pregnancies. As a global issue, the incidence of child marriage crosses borders, classes, and ethnic groups. It will be important to remain mindful that when speaking about cultural and social differences, we must be careful not to sit in judgment of the communities that practice child marriage. The goal is to educate, encourage and empower them to make changes that benefit girls, families, and communities.

Prior to viewing the film, consider conducting a brief discussion to set up some of the themes covered in the films. Review societal expectations for adolescence, marriage, and life opportunities. Encourage students to take notes during the film for discussion later since there may be a time lag between watching the film and discussion.

The following websites may be useful for gathering additional background information:

NOW “Child Brides: Stolen Lives” Discussion Guide

Child Rights Information Network: www.crin.org

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW): www.icrw.org

International Women’s Health Coalition (IWHC): www.iwhc.org

Population Council: www.popcouncil.org

UNFPA: www.unfpa.org

UNICEF: www.unicef.org

UNICEF Statistics: www.childinfo.org

Working Group on Girls (WGG): www.girlsrights.org

Background on Child Marriage

WHAT IS CHILD MARRIAGE?

- A marriage or union between two people where one or both of the partners is under the age of 18. (**The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** defines children as people under the age of 18)

HOW MANY WOMEN ARE MARRIED AS CHILDREN?

- The Population Council estimates that 1/3 of girls in the **developing world** (excluding China) were married before the age of 18.
- The Population Council research indicates that 1 in 7 girls in the **developing world** (excluding China) will marry before they turn 15.
- If current patterns continue, up to 100 million girls will marry as children in the coming decade.

WHAT ARE THE MOTIVATIONS FOR CHILD MARRIAGE?

- The reasons are mainly economic. Marriage in many communities brings money to the family in the form of **dowries** or **bridewealth**.
- Overwhelmingly, child marriage practices occur among the poor where educational and employment opportunities for girls are limited or non-existent.
- Families often believe marrying their daughters will protect her from premarital sex that may result in unintended pregnancies and **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)** and **HIV**.
- Parents may believe that other families may be better able to provide for their daughters.
- Socially, families may seek alliances through marriage.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF EARLY MARRIAGE FOR A YOUNG BRIDE?

- Child marriage impinges on girls’ reproductive rights, right to work, and right to choose.
- Girls are often separated from their families, drop out of school, become socially isolated and receive limited support.
- New brides come under intense pressure to become pregnant and often face risky pregnancies. Early childbearing is linked to maternal mortality and a debilitating condition known as **obstetric fistula**.
- Girls who marry young often have husbands who are much older, with whom girls may have little in common and who are more likely to have **HIV** and other **STIs** from extra-marital relationships.
- Young married girls often *lack power* in their new household and are therefore susceptible to HIV and sexual violence. Girls face difficulty abstaining from intercourse, demanding condom use, and keeping husbands monogamous.

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WHERE IS EARLY MARRIAGE PREVALENT?

- One in seven girls living in the developing world, excluding China, is married before she turns 18.
- While the practice has decreased globally over the last 30 years, it remains common in rural areas and among the poorest of the poor.
- In Southern Asia, 48% -- nearly 10 million -- of girls are married before the age of 18.
- In Africa, 42% of girls were married before turning 18.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, 29% of girls are married by age 18.
- Some states in the United States permit marriage for teens as young as 14 who have parental consent.

WHY IS CHILD MARRIAGE A CRITICAL HEALTH ISSUE?

- **Premature Pregnancy:** Child brides almost always bear children before they are physically – or emotionally – ready.
- **Maternal Mortality:** Girls younger than 15 are five times more likely to die during child birth or pregnancy than older women. Pregnancy-related deaths are the leading cause of mortality for girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide.
- **Infant Mortality:** Mortality rates for babies born to mothers under age 20 are almost 75% higher than for children born to older mothers. The children that survive are more likely to be premature, have a low birth weight, and are more at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS.
- **Health Problems:** Premature childbirth can lead to a variety of health problems for mothers, including fistula, a debilitating condition that causes chronic incontinence. Girls with fistula are often abandoned by their husbands and ostracized by society. There are approximately 2 million girls living with fistula, and 100,000 new cases every year.
- **HIV/AIDS:** Married girls may be more likely to contract sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS, than unmarried girls. Young girls are more physically susceptible to STDs, have less access to reproductive education and health services and are often powerless to demand the use of contraception.
- **Illiteracy:** Child brides are often pulled out of school and denied further education. Their children are also more likely to be illiterate.
- **Poverty:** Child brides – already poor – are isolated and denied education and employment opportunities, making it difficult for them break out of the cycle of poverty.
- **Abuse and Violence:** Child brides are more likely to experience domestic abuse, and violence than their peers who marry later.
- **Mental Health:** Violence and abuse can lead to post-traumatic stress and depression.
- **Isolation and Abandonment:** Child brides are often isolated from their peers and abandoned if they develop health problems like fistula.

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WHY IS CHILD MARRIAGE A DEVELOPMENT ISSUE?

- Girls may be poorly prepared to raise a family because they lack information about proper health care and nutrition.
- Teenage mothers are more likely to bear babies prematurely or with low birth weight.
- Countries where child marriage is practiced suffer from:
 - higher poverty, birth and death rates.
 - lower levels of development in the areas of education, employment, and health care.
 - generational cycle of girls’ lack of schooling, subsequent poverty, and children’s lack of education.

WHY IS CHILD MARRIAGE DETRIMENTAL TO A GIRLS’ EDUCATION?

- Girls married at a young age are often pulled out of school.
- Domestic duties and childbearing may prevent a girl from re-enrolling.
- As mothers, girls without education are less likely to send their children to school.

HOW IS EDUCATION A SOLUTION TO CHILD MARRIAGE?

- Experts describe educating girls as having “cascading benefits” because an educated girl positively affects her children, family, and her community.
- Girls with a secondary education are up to six times less likely to marry young compared to girls with little or no education.
- Girls’ education leads to smaller and healthier families, greater investment in children’s health and education, and greater opportunities for employment.
- Girls who stay in school longer marry later and are greater contributors to a community’s political, social, and economic development.

WHY IS PREVENTION DIFFICULT?

- Traditions and attitudes may be firmly entrenched in a community. Even parents who do not wish to marry their children at a young age feel compelled to do so.
- In many countries that have passed legislation against Child Marriage, laws are not enforced and policies are under-funded.
- Government solutions must include engagement with communities through outreach, discussion, and public forums.
- Girls are often “invisible” to policymakers since these violations occur in the home and within communities.
- In many countries, laws and policies addressing child marriage are inadequate or not enforced.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SOLUTIONS?

- Providing economic incentives for families to keep girls in school.
- Build self-esteem and skills in girls to help them resist pressure to get married and give them access to other opportunities.
- Work with families to discuss benefits of keeping their daughters in school and delaying marriage. Help families give girls more of a say in the marriage process, including when and who they marry.

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- Offer reproductive health education and services to married girls.
- Create educational and employment opportunities for women in a community.

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEGISLATION AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE

At the international level, a child’s right to marry as an adult is outlined and protected in a number of human rights instruments:

- The 1948 **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** recognizes the **right to free and full consent to a marriage**. Consent is not considered ‘free and full’ when one of the partners is underage. (www.udhr.org/index.htm)
- The 1979 **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** states that the marriage of a child is illegal and encourages countries to pass legislation ratifying a minimum age of marriage. (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/)
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child** links the eradication of child marriage to children’s’ rights to express views freely, be protected from abuse and harmful practices. (www.unicef.org/crc/)
- In 2000, the international community of the United Nations committed to 8 **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development. (www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)

However, enforcement of these protections falls on the government of individual countries. International agreements and legislation are often unable to ensure adequate enforcement and suitable funding of programs.

In the United States, legislation addressing child marriage was introduced in both the House and Senate in 2007 (check ICRW’s website – www.icrw.org -- for updates on legislation):

- On July 25, 2007, Representative Betty McCollum (D-Minn) introduced the International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act (HR 3175). Bill is waiting on two more co-sponsors before heading to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The bill currently has 41 co-sponsors.
- According to Senator McCollum’s website, the bill, “H.R. 3175 supports the demonstrated strategy for preventing and reducing child marriage: investing in schooling, safe community spaces, skills development and other means of empowering girls that improve their status and give them the freedom to delay marriage and choose their partners.”
- On August 3, 2007, Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Chuck Hagel (R-NE) introduced the International Child Marriage Prevention Act (S 1998). The bill has been referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

FACTS AND FIGURES

CHILD MARRIAGE

- One in seven girls in the developing world (excluding China) will marry before 15.
- More than 100 million girls in the developing world will be married during the next 10 years.
- Although the definition of child marriage includes boys, most children married under the age of 18 years are girls.
- While the practice has decreased globally over the last 30 years, it remains common in rural areas and among the poorest of the poor.
- In Southern Asia, 48% -- nearly 10 million -- of girls are married before the age of 18.
- In Africa, 42% of girls were married before turning 18.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, 29% of girls are married by age 18.

Proportion of Women aged 15-24 married before the age of 18 (UNICEF)

South Asia	48%
Sub-Saharan Africa	42%
Latin America and Caribbean	29%

HEALTH RISKS

- The leading causes of death for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are pregnancy related.
- Girls aged 10-14 are five times more likely to die of pregnancy and childbirth related problems than women who are aged 20-24.
- Women who marry younger are more likely to experience violence.

EDUCATION

- UNICEF declares that “Education is often seen as the key to preventing child marriage.”
- Girls aged 15-19 who attend primary school are less likely to marry than their counterparts.
- The more education a girl receives, the less likely she is to marry before the age of 18.

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- Better-educated women exert more control over their reproductive lives and marriage choices.
- Increasing education and economic opportunities can delay marriage.
- Women who are educated in HIV prevention are less likely to marry as children.
- Progress in girls’ education helps fight HIV/AIDS, protect children from abuse, promote immunization, and ensure greater chances for survival.

SOURCES

Centers for Disease Control: “Health Consequences of Child Marriage in Africa,”
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol12no11/06-0510.htm#1

ICRW:

“Child Marriage and Education,”

http://www.icrw.org/docs/2006_cmtoolkit/cm_factsheets_edu.pdf

“New Insights on Preventing Child Marriage,” <http://www.icrw.org/docs/2007-new-insights-preventing-child-marriage.pdf>

IWHC: “Child Marriage Fact Sheet,” <http://www.iwhc.org/resources/childmarriagefacts.cfm>

Population Council: “The Implications of Early Marriage for HIV/AIDS Policy,”
<http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/EMBfinalENG.pdf>

UNFPA: “Child Marriage Fact Sheet,”

http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/presskit/factsheets/facts_child_marriage.htm

UNICEF:

“Child Marriage,” <http://www.childinfo.org/areas/childmarriage/>

“Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice,”

http://www.childinfo.org/areas/childmarriage/docs/Early_Marriage%20Final.pdf

Background on “Child Brides: Stolen Lives”

NIGER

Niger has the highest rate of early marriage in the world. The legal age for marriage is 15 years old and husbands are an average of 10 years older than their wives. Niger also has highest illiteracy rate in Africa. Families marry their daughters for a variety of reasons: to ease their financial burden, to bond with other families, and to protect their daughters from becoming pregnant out of wedlock.

NOW’s production introduces viewers to Habi, a teenage girl at the National Hospital in Niamey who was married at 12, suffered obstructed labor, gave birth to a still-born child, and has come for surgery. We hear from her father how seeing her suffering is changing his mind about early marriage.

We also meet male leaders of the community who are involved in efforts to delay early marriage. They recognize the harm child marriage does to the girls and to their communities. The leader of these men is an emir, the king to a vast region of Niger, who travels with a motorcycle brigade from district to district spreading the word about early marriage.

INDIA

In India, 6.4 million children under the age of 18 are married. Children are typically wed at a young age, but don’t live together until the girl has reached puberty. Although child marriage is against the law, it is rarely enforced. Many weddings occur in secret to evade law. NOW’s production team filmed an illegal wedding in the state of Rajasthan, which has the highest rate of child marriage in the country.

NOW reports on the struggle of Shakuntala Verma, a government worker, who was attacked and had her hands almost cut off when she tried to stop 15 child marriages from taking place in the state of Madhyah Pradesh.

NOW also interviews students at The Veerni Hostel for Girls, a boarding school for girls from some of the most impoverished villages in Rajasthan. Veerni provides a haven for young girls to prevent them from being married off to early. There we meet Mamta, a 12-year-old girl whose mother agreed to send her to Veerni rather than send Mamta to live with her husband, to whom she was wed at seven.

GUATEMALA

In Guatemala -- where more than 40% of the population is indigenous (mostly Mayan) -- poverty, rigid gender roles, and ethnic discrimination limit the opportunities of Mayan women.

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As a result, Mayan girls and women often lead lives characterized by early marriage, frequent childbearing, inferior social status, and social isolation. They begin to marry around age 14; half are married by 18.

NOW’s production team traveled to the highlands of Guatemala, six hours north of Guatemala City. There they interviewed a 13-year-old girl who is pregnant and scared of giving birth. They also visit a young Mayan woman who avoided early marriage and now counsels the benefits of later marriage to her community.

GLOSSARY

Bride price or bride wealth: money or other valuables given to the bride’s family by the groom’s family.

Childhood: The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that childhood extends until the age of 18.

Consent: affirmation given to an action based on the understanding of the facts and implications (i.e. agreeing to marry someone)

Developing World: set of countries characterized by poverty and low standards of living. The United Nations established a Human Development Index (HDI) to assess a country’s development by measuring literacy, life expectancy, income levels, and GDP.

Development: context for understanding ways to improve the quality of life of people (economic, social, education, etc.)

Dowry: gift of money or other valuables given the groom’s family by the bride’s family on the occasion of the couple’s marriage.

HIV/AIDS: Infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) occurs through the transfer of blood, semen, or breast milk. HIV can lead to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), a life-threatening condition where the body’s immune system fails.

Obstetric fistula: severe childbirth injury caused by lack of proper medical attention (See www.endfistula.org to learn more)

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs): Illnesses caused by transmission of infection during sexual contact. These can include Chlamydia, gonorrhea, genital herpes, and HIV.

Discussion Questions for Facilitator

1. Discuss initial impressions to the documentary
 - Has anyone heard about child marriage before? What was shocking? Surprising?
 - If the group is feeling shy, have everyone go around listing a fact they learned from the film. If possible, have them reflect on why they chose to highlight that fact.

2. Discuss the role of this documentary in addressing child marriage
 - Gives wide exposure to a population that is often “invisible.”
 - Highlights viable solutions for preventing child marriage.
 - Profiles gives us insights into the lives of individuals.

2. Characterize the ordinary experience of being an adolescent
 - What characterizes the period between childhood and adulthood?
 - Highlight certain features like attending school, health care, economic opportunities, friendships, ability to choose relationships, dreams of marriage/weddings.
 - What pressures do young people face at school and at home?
 - What aspects of childhood should be protected?
 - Where should this protection come from? Families, schools, government?

3. List similarities between the young women profiled:
 - What are the characteristics of the girls’ lives profiled in the film?
 - What do the girls have in common? What are some of the differences?
 - What values do we have in common? (importance of family, tradition, role of child-bearing)
 - How does their experience of childhood mirror ours? What additional pressures do they face?

4. Engage in a discussion of the differences of goals and expectations:
 - What were the members of the group doing and thinking about at age 6, 12, and 15? How did they regard their choices and freedom? How does this compare to the young women featured in the film?
 - What are the group’s thoughts on marriage? How does the group plan to choose a spouse? How much parental or community involvement do they expect?
 - How do the community-based solutions featured in the film seek to restore this freedom of choice and opportunity? Are these strategies sensitive to community traditions? Should they be?

5. Note the global nature of the issue and its relationship to gender discrimination:
 - The documentary covers child marriage in three countries: Niger, India, and Guatemala.
 - Why is this a global problem? Why is child marriage prevalent in these countries? Are there any common themes?
 - Do girls have a high status in these communities? Why not? How does this compare to other parts of the world?

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6. What is our responsibility towards the girls in the film? How can we respond?
- Probe for ideas about how people thousands of miles away might help.
 - Refer to the Action Kit for specific ideas.

For More Information:

Fact Sheets on Child Marriage:

CDC: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/vol12no11/06_0510.htm

ICRW: http://www.icrw.org/docs/2006_cmtoolkit/cm_all.pdf

USAID:

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/pop/news/issue_briefs/prev_child_marriage.pdf

UNFPA: http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/presskit/factsheets/facts_child_marriage.htm

Learn more about issues facing girls:

Child Rights Information Network: www.crin.org

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW): www.icrw.org

International Women’s Health Coalition (IWHC): www.iwhc.org

Population Council: www.popcouncil.org/ChildBride

UNFPA: www.unfpa.org

UNICEF: www.unicef.org

UNICEF Statistics: www.childinfo.org

Working Group on Girls (WGG): www.girlsrights.org

Join Campaigns advocating education for girls:

Basic Education Coalition: Advocates for quality basic education around the world.

www.basiced.org/

Education for All (UNESCO): www.unesco.org

Fast-Track Initiative (FTI) (World Bank): www.fasttrackinitiative.org

United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNICEF): www.ungei.org

Campaign to push the United States to ratify Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) organized by National Organization for Women

(NOW): www.now.org

World Education: Using education as a strategy for transforming the lives of girls and women,

World Education works in 40 countries in Africa, Asia and the United States. www.worlded.org

Girls Learn International (GLI): www.girlslearn.org