

Continuity and Change: Marriage and Parenthood Among Ethiopian Adolescents

Evidence from two qualitative studies

Key findings and messages



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Marriage: diverse forms and changing practices

- With changes brought about by education and urbanisation, adolescents and young people have a greater say compared to previous generations in decisions about who, how and when they marry. However, despite this apparent increased agency, customary and patriarchal norms still tend to regulate marriage processes and practices, especially in rural areas, constraining girls' and young women's choices.
- Informal cohabitation is increasingly taking place in urban areas. This is frequently as a response to unintended pregnancy or the desire to give legitimacy to a sexual relationship, or in order to bypass the costs of formal marriage. Cohabitation may be seen as a means of obtaining a degree of security by young people facing the pressures of unemployment. However, unless they lead to formal marriage, these unions are often characterised by fragility and subject to breakdown.
- The role of marriage payments varies according to context. In some communities, the rising costs of marriage payments are a barrier to young people pursuing formal marriage, pushing them into socially and materially precarious partnerships and potential indebtedness, with the bridewealth payments controlled and used by the older generation. However, in other communities and where families are in agreement, these traditional payments are less rigid and can help couples to form households and establish independent livelihoods.

Post-marriage decision-making: persistence of patriarchal gender roles

- Despite widespread assumptions about greater gender equality among this generation of young people, patriarchal norms continue to bear heavily on household roles, in relations among young couples, and on decision-making within marriage. Wives carry out almost all domestic work, and give up paid work upon marriage or child-bearing, though some hope to go back to paid work later.

While some women were able to use contraception when they got married, most came under pressure from husbands, parents and in-laws to conceive as early as possible, despite many not feeling ready for parenthood. Imbalanced power relations within marriages and between young women and their in-laws disadvantage those wishing to delay first pregnancies, and some young women take contraception in secret, often causing disputes.

- Parenting roles remain heavily gendered, with young women bearing most responsibilities and husbands rarely helping, although some young men were active and committed fathers, even after break-ups. Many adolescents and young people are unprepared and lack the material and social resources necessary in their parenting roles, requiring those who can to call on support from relatives, especially mothers.

Vulnerabilities and challenges young single women face

- Single mothers are especially vulnerable and face challenges in terms of social attitudes and discrimination. Unmarried adolescent girls and young women face constraints in accessing birth control. If they conceive they may wish, or be pressured by their partners or in-laws, to have an abortion. However, abortion is illegal except in rape and mental health cases and services are not available, exposing them to unsafe abortions. If they decide to have a child, they may be rejected by the child's father and their own family and be socially ostracised. They often do not feel confident to seek out mother and child services and face difficulties with childcare unless they can rely on family support.

- Early marriages are prone to early divorce in large part due to the economic and social pressures adolescents and young couples face. In divorce, young women are generally disadvantaged in the distribution of assets and remarriage tends to be more difficult for them than for young men, especially if they have children.
- There is an increasing community and state-level trend towards protecting young women in marriage, in the process of divorce, and around their rights to property and child support. However, patriarchal customary norms are still influential and women's rights are often not fully observed.

Young people's reflections on marital choices and experiences

- Many young women and young men regret the timing and circumstances in which they married and became first-time parents, and the consequent loss of the freedoms of childhood. In addition, they feel that marriage and parenthood require them to revise their childhood aspirations, for example to pursue their education, and prioritise the meeting of new adult roles and responsibilities.
- Most of the adolescent girls and boys had already dropped out of school for a range of reasons before they got married. However, once married many regret not continuing with their education, although occasionally some are able to continue with vocational training. Adolescent mothers in particular lack chances to return to school or to develop skills for work.
- Young women's views on changes to their lives after marriage vary depending on many factors, notably family circumstances, reasons for and their choice in marriage, relationships with their husband and in-laws, and working conditions before and after marriage.
- Coming to terms with married life often depends on the extent to which young women are able to maintain earlier relationships and establish new social networks. Many young married women and men express joy and fulfilment in having children.

The policy context on child marriage and parenting

Ethiopia has attracted global recognition for its efforts to address child marriage and is one of 12 countries supported by UNFPA, UNICEF and their Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage (UNFPA-UNICEF 2019).¹ Ethiopia also gained the support of the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa. Following the adoption of the National Strategy and Action Plan on Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Children in Ethiopia in 2013, and the pledge made at the Girl Summit in London in 2014, the Government of Ethiopia hosted a National Girl Summit to reiterate its commitment to ending child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) by 2025. The current second Growth and Transformation Plan (2015-2020) aims to reduce child marriage and FGM/C by 50 per cent by 2020. Most recently, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth launched a National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C (2020-2024) in August 2019.

The main policy focus around parenting has been on family planning for adolescents and youth through the National Adolescent and Youth Reproductive Health Strategy (2007-2015), which seeks to increase the access and use of quality reproductive health information and services, developing standards, service delivery guidelines and minimum delivery packages for youth-friendly services through planning, implementation and monitoring tools.² Other aspects of parenting have focused on education through the 2010 National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education, and nutrition with the 2015 National Strategy for Newborn and Child Survival.

Young Lives qualitative studies on child and young marriage and parenthood

Young Lives has carried out five rounds of surveys in different regions of the country.³ Findings indicate that more than 1 in 3 of young women had married by age 22, and of these nearly half by age 18. In stark contrast, 7 per cent of young men had married by age 18 and 2 per cent had fathered a child by age 22. One in ten young women had given birth by age 18, rising to over 1 in 4 by age 22 (Woldehanna et al. 2018). Young Lives has carried out two further qualitative sub-studies focusing on young people's experiences of marriage and parenthood. The first, 'Pathways to Marriage and Parenthood',⁴ was conducted in three rural sites, in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray regions in 2016. The second on 'Young Marriage and Parenthood' was undertaken in the same two rural communities in Oromia and Tigray and in an urban site in Addis Ababa in 2018, as part of a wider comparative study including research in India, Peru and Zambia.⁵ The first study focused on the factors leading up to marriage and parenthood, while the second sought to understand the experiences of young people who are already married, cohabit or are parents, and those who are separated or divorced.⁶ Young Lives' longitudinal approach allows for understanding the viewpoints of children in their transition to gendered adulthood from a life-course perspective.

Marriage and cohabitation: changing practices and greater agency of the younger generation

Marriage and motherhood in childhood was the norm in previous generations, but has increasingly come to be seen as incompatible with the expectations for modern female childhood and girls and young women's rights. A growing discourse

1 For details on the programme see <https://www.unicef.org/protection/unfpa-unicef-global-programme-accelerate-action-end-child-marriage>

2 The legal age of adulthood is 18, while adolescence is defined in the strategy following WHO definitions as between ages 10-19, and youth according to the 2004 National Youth Strategy as between ages 15-24.

3 This includes five rounds of survey in 20 sites and five waves of qualitative research in five of the sites.

4 Funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

5 This study was funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

6 Both studies generated qualitative and life history data through individual interviews with young men and women, focus group discussions with girls/young women and boys/young men, adult mothers, adult fathers and service providers, and key informant interviews with health care workers and women and children's affairs experts.

of female empowerment suggests significant expansion of 'choice' for girls, but close inspection of girls' lived experiences of marriage and motherhood suggests a more complex, uneven, picture (Crivello et al. 2019).

Types of marriage vary across the sites and are changing over time. Formal marriages through wedding ceremonies, often arranged by parents and constraining girls' choices and without their consent, remain common in rural areas, following traditional procedures which require marriage payments. Cohabitation has become more common in urban areas. That said, the expansion of education, work, social media and urbanisation have provided increased opportunities and contexts for young people in all the sites to get to know each other and make their own decisions about forming relationships (Pankhurst et al. 2016).

In all the sites, girls' decision-making in the marriage process has improved, compared to their mothers and even their older siblings, and they have more choice and can, and often do, reject proposals brought to or by their parents, although this sometimes results in conflicts with parents. At the same time, patriarchal and religious norms persist in marriage procedures, and young men continue to have more say than young women, with young women facing possible social stigma if they do not marry early. Moreover, despite the younger generation's improved agency, where their unions lack formality or family backing customary norms still tend to regulate marriage processes and practices. This is especially the case in rural sites, with elders sent by the parents of the groom to the bride's parents and marriage payments negotiated. We also found regional difference: for example, it is still common for parents to arrange marriages in the Amhara and Tigray sites but less so in the community in Oromia, where young couples often elope to avoid arranged marriages and bridewealth payments.

In the urban site in Addis Ababa, those in late adolescence are generally able to exercise their relationship choices more freely, and often decide to cohabit and make their own decisions as to when to get married.⁷ However, unplanned pregnancy

often precipitates cohabitation or marriage, and the social and economic pressures on adolescents marrying often leads to such early marriages ending in divorce, which then tends to disadvantage young women, especially if they have had a child.

Young people facing pressures of unemployment, addictive behaviours, and digital and social media promoting promiscuity may more readily enter relationships and cohabit. There is considerable social anxiety in urban areas regarding environmental threats to young people's well-being, including access to pornography, and the presence of *shisha* and *khat* houses,⁸ and bars around schools frequented mainly by young men, which are believed to push young people into risky activities which can lead to early pregnancy.

The burden of marriage gifts and opportunities of parental endowments

Practices of marriage gifts and parental endowments to the marrying couple are common in rural areas, but vary depending on different cultural traditions and have been changing in recent years.

In the Oromia site, bridewealth payments from the groom's relatives to the bride's kin, known as *gabbara*, were common in the past and continue to be expected, at least in theory. However, increasingly, young people are making their own decisions to get married and in order to avoid the bridewealth payments, couples often elope in what is referred to as 'voluntary abduction', in contrast to the former practice of forced abduction which has become very rare. To achieve reconciliation with the family, a compensation payment, called *gaddissa*, is paid, after which the couple can live together. However, they may not be fully accepted by the bride's family, who may not provide the couple with endowments or let them visit them. While bridewealth payments are often an obstacle to marriage and a major burden for young men, sometimes leading to the couple's indebtedness and social isolation, increasingly the *gaddissa* reconciliation payment seems to be substituting the full bridewealth payment.

⁷ Adolescence is divided in the Adolescent and Youth Reproductive Health Strategy following WHO guidelines into early (10-13 years), middle (14-15) and late (16-19).

⁸ *Shisha* is a tobacco water pipe; *khat* is a narcotic plant chewed for its stimulant effect.

In Tigray, dowry, called *gezmi*, was traditionally provided by the bride's family for their daughter to enable the couple to establish themselves. The amount provided seems to have become more flexible depending on the family's resources, and gifts from the groom's family are also often provided. These resources from both sets of parents can assist young couples, especially those from better-off families, to set up a new household.

In the Amhara site, *tilosh* gifts and endowments, which in principle involve matching contributions from the bride and groom's families, were customarily provided to the couple to enable them to establish themselves with resources, notably livestock and access to land. Such practices of contributions from both families are still prevalent among families that can afford such endowments, and seem to have become more common in the sites in the other regions.

Post-marital gender roles and decision-making continue to be shaped by patriarchal norms

While young women now have a greater say on who they marry and when, once they are married gender norms bear heavily on household roles and relations among young couples. Despite widespread assumptions about greater gender equality in this generation of young people, young women's bargaining power within marriage remains limited (Chuta 2017). The norm of domestic work being done almost exclusively by wives remains virtually unchanged and stereotypes about men managing income generation and women keeping the home are common. Likewise, childcare is still considered to be the women's domain, usually affecting their chances to seek paid work. Many young wives receive some assistance with childcare from their mothers, mothers-in law, other female family members, or relatives. Some husbands look after children when their wives are busy with other work, such as collecting firewood or going to the mill, and some young men had taken on primary caregiving responsibility when their wives abandoned them.

Most of the young wives said that domestic chores were similar in both their natal and marital homes, the difference for most being the additional

burden of childcare. Almost all the young women who had been doing paid work gave this up on getting married and a few did so when they had a child. In the Tigray site some married girls were relieved at having to give up hard manual labour (for example, in a stone crusher plant). However, many young women aspired to return to work, when their children were older, but knew that this would depend on their husband's consent. Young wives also often complained that husbands felt entitled to make most decisions on their own, sometimes leading to disputes, as recalled by a wife in Tigray:

We never agree on all issues; he always likes to be the boss, he thinks he knows everything. That is why I am not happy in my life with him.

Contested decision-making over fertility

Young women's agency, even over fertility choices, is often constrained by patriarchal values. While awareness about contraception use is fairly high, young married women encounter strong social pressures from their husbands, parents and in-laws to conceive one or two years into marriage, to 'prove fertility'. This discourages them from delaying their first pregnancy, despite many not feeling ready for parenthood at the time.⁹ While a few women did start using contraception when they got married, most delayed using it until after they had a first child. There were also cases of young women who took contraception surreptitiously, without informing their husbands, as recalled by a woman in the Oromia site:

I didn't want to get pregnant. I was taking pills during the first year because I wanted to save money before having a child. On the second year of the marriage, he figured out that I was taking a pill when I went to health centre. He then forbade me from going to health centre. He wanted me to get pregnant very much. But I was very mad because I didn't want a child then.

Tensions over contraception can lead to disputes and even divorce. However, in one case in Tigray a young wife who had a contraception injection in secret was later able to persuade her husband that they should delay having a child until they finished building their house.

⁹ The latest Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS 2016) indicates that only 36 per cent of married women age 15-49 use any method of family planning, and 13 per cent of adolescent women age 15-19 are already mothers or pregnant with their first child.

Reproductive health risks and parenting challenges for unmarried adolescents and youth.

Older adolescents, particularly girls and young women who are not married, face social constraints in accessing contraception and have limited access to health care centres. If they conceive they may be pressured or wish to have an abortion, but they face social stigma and an inability to obtain services locally, exposing them to risky travel and unsafe abortions. If they decide to have a child without getting married, they may be rejected by the father of their child, their own family, and socially ostracised by their community. An adolescent girl in the Oromia site reported that her boyfriend was unhappy when she told him she was pregnant and asked her to have an abortion. She took medicine from a pharmacy but did not succeed in aborting; she was about to try a second time when her boyfriend's parents and a friend of her mother intervened and made her stop.

While married women can more easily deliver their baby in health centres, unmarried young women tend to give birth at home for fear of humiliation. Moreover, they often find it difficult to bring up their child as single mothers and to find work and childcare unless they can rely on family support, particularly from their mothers or mothers-in-law. Unmarried young men also struggle to fulfil their responsibilities and their expected social role as family provider, particularly when jobs are scarce or they are in debt and can't rely on family for social or economic support.

Early marriage leading to early divorce disadvantages young women

Early marriages are often precipitated by unplanned pregnancies, and older adolescent girls and boys and young people usually end up getting married without having intended to. Such couples often face many economic and social pressures and tensions in the marriage and with in-laws; these conditions sometimes lead to spousal conflict and in some cases domestic violence against women. Many such early marriages and informal unions end in early separation or divorce. Among the young women and young men who had divorced many felt that they had not yet been ready for the responsibilities of marriage and managing a household together.

In cases of separation or divorce, young men are often able to remarry fairly easily whereas young women face social opprobrium and greater difficulty remarrying, especially if they have had children. Living as single women and especially as single mothers, it is difficult to earn a living and find childcare, particularly with limited formal support available, and they often have to rely on family or neighbours. However, there is evidence of changes in local-level *kebele* and *woreda* support towards women's rights in marriage and especially divorce, with local authorities upholding women's rights to access to land and child support. Local governments in some communities have strengthened systems for documenting paternity in order to make fathers accountable for child support. A social court head in the community in Tigray reported the case of a young man who had refused to acknowledge paternity and was sued, tested and subsequently required to pay child support:

We assess the witnesses and try to help them. We sue the suspected person ... and ask for a blood test. So, for the past two years there is not a child who has an unidentified father. We had three cases of children born outside of marriage ... Two of them have their fathers identified while the third is in the court process. There are pregnancies outside of marriage, but we don't have children whose fathers are unknown.

Nonetheless, patriarchal community norms are still influential, especially in the other sites, and prevent women's rights being fully implemented.

Young peoples' reflections on their choices and experiences

Older adolescent boys and girls and young people were asked about how their lives had changed after they got married early. Most, when younger, had high aspirations for education and jobs and had not anticipated getting married so young. Many regretted the timing and circumstances in which they married and became first-time parents, and in particular, not being able to continue with their education. This was especially the case when parental influence or unplanned and unwanted pregnancies pressurised them to get married before they felt ready to face the challenges of married life. Some young men regretted unplanned marriages, feeling their lives had gone 'off track' due to parenthood, and that they had spoiled their girlfriends' lives too. Some young women, who were hoping to migrate to work,

found they had to abandon their plans on becoming pregnant. Others, however, who had left school and not obtained jobs felt that marriage was the only obvious choice left to them. Those with children felt they needed to review their aspirations to correspond with their new responsibilities.

Adolescent girls stopping school, getting married and not continuing with education

There is often an assumption that girls stop school or are forced to quit in order to get married. While we did come across such cases, for the most part other reasons seem to have triggered girls dropping out of school and only then, when other prospects seemed limited, did they choose or were persuaded to get married. Among the young people who were forced to drop out of school to marry was a girl in the Tigray site who did not get assistance from the school administration to prevent the marriage, even with the support of her uncle against her parents. Another girl in the Amhara site was told by her father that since she was not doing well at school she had to get married, even though she wanted to complete at least Grade 10. Only one girl in the Oromia site decided, of her own accord, to leave school at Grade 6 to marry, but she added that she wanted to get away from her aunt who had adopted her but overworked her and would not let her study. Most of the young women had dropped out of school first for a variety of reasons, despite many wishing to have continued. Some mentioned not understanding lessons or not doing well at school. Other reasons included failing a grade, health problems, having to look after or support parents, engaging in paid work, changing residence, and disputes in school with teachers or other students.

On the whole, adolescent girls and young women who got married did not continue with formal education. Some were too afraid or ashamed to see their friends, or felt guilty that they were married younger than their peers. However, a few women were able to continue and take their Grade 8 or 10 exams after marriage, especially if their husbands were supportive. There were also cases of young women who continued with other forms of training, such as a young woman in Oromia who was training in hairdressing, one in Amhara who was undertaking hotel management training, and another in the Addis Ababa site who was learning embroidery. One young woman in the Amhara site continued her schooling

in Grade 9 after giving birth, but then dropped out to seek work in the Gulf states.

Contrasting comparisons of life before and after marriage

Young women's comparisons of their lives before and after marriage differed and depended on a wide range of factors. These included conditions of their natal household and their position in it; the reasons they got married and the extent of their choice in the decision; and where they got married and lived. Their views also depended on their relationship with their husband and in-laws, what work they were involved in before and after marriage, and the extent to which they wanted and were able to maintain links with the parents and friends and could establish new social networks.

Many young fathers who were unmarried were ambivalent when they felt their lives had gone off-track by 'accidental' fatherhood. Young men often struggled to fulfil this role due to lack of work or preparation for fatherhood, and economic uncertainty was a prevalent source of worry. Marriage resulted in young couples having new roles and responsibilities with a full adult status, regardless of the age at which they got married. Some young married women expressed nostalgia and regretted the loss of childhood freedom where they could play and move around with friends in their communities, and were envious of their unmarried friends and peers. A married girl in Oromia expressed her feelings as follows:

The living condition of my friends is better. They are still free to play with their friends. They are free to go to school. They continue to learn their education. They are enjoying themselves by walking on the riverside. They are happy to play with their friends. They study their lessons. I have been missing all of these things. I have no right to travel to the river and play with my friends. I could not go to the school. I feel shy to play with my friends.

However, there were also cases of young women who felt they had been overworked when they lived at their parents. A few girls recalled unhappy childhoods. A married girl in the Amhara site recalled:

I didn't play much as a child. My brother used to control me very much. He didn't want me to wander around. I prefer the current way of life.

How a young married woman felt about her married life depended to a large extent on her husband's livelihood and how he treated her. For instance, one girl in Amhara said:

My current life is much better than my childhood life. Now I live my life, I live by myself, I eat good things, and I have a good social life.

Another girl from the same community felt her life was better after marriage as her parents were poor and she did not have enough food or clothes, whereas her husband was a very good person, did not make her work hard and gave her enough money. Similarly, a married girl in Tigray felt she had much less work and more free time after getting married:

I have a lot of free time now; I only have to cook for me and my husband. However, when I was living with my parents, I used to cook and bake *injera* [bread] for the whole family which is much harder. I didn't have that much free time in the past.

There were also cases of women who were unhappy after getting married, especially if their husband was less well off or they were not getting on well with him or their in-laws. The circumstances of the marriage also matter, as in the case of a young woman in the Oromia site who was compelled to marry her boyfriend after he raped her. She expressed bitterness at having been deceived and was not reconciled to her imposed marriage. Poor treatment by husbands or their complaints were often a source of unhappiness for some married women, such as a young woman in Oromia whose husband always complained that her cooking was not as good as his mother's.

Marriage frequently curtailed young women's social and spatial freedoms, and some young women were even required to ask for their husband's permission to meet friends. Many women said they suffered from feeling lonely or isolated in their new homes, especially if they were not welcomed by their in-laws, often due to tensions with their mother-in-law. Following the established virilocal norm where women move away from their natal community to join their husband's village, many

women moved too far from their natal area to maintain regular contact with their family and friends. While some women who went to live with their husbands in a town were happy to be away from their home communities and enjoyed better services, electricity, shops and recreation activities, others who moved to more remote rural areas often faced challenges in starting a new life.

Coming to terms with married life: the role of social relations and child-bearing

Despite the initial sense of isolation felt by many young women leaving their natal area and coming to an unfamiliar area, married women also acquired a new social status and often were able to participate in social institutions in which they were not involved as girls. Many joined *iddir* funeral associations or *mahber* or *senbete* religious associations. They were also addressed with terms of respect within the community and participated at community events such as baptisms, weddings and meetings. Married women were also entitled to land, with their names being added to legal certificates, and could obtain an equal share upon divorce, at least in theory.

Giving birth was one of the most important milestones in the lives of married couples and most married women expressed a strong sense of joy at becoming mothers and a subsequent sense of fulfilment in their married life. One young mother from the Oromia site expressed this as follows:

After I gave birth, I did not feel lonely and without work. It is because, I spend the whole day in giving care for my daughter but previously, before I gave birth, the days were longer for me.

Even though almost all the young wives were happy to have had children, in some cases those who had unplanned pregnancies, especially if the couple were poor, worried about looking after the child and a few expressed regrets that this would affect their lives and ability to study and work.

Key recommendations

- There have been important initiatives and government interventions to prevent child marriage and delay early marriage. For the well-being of adolescent boys and especially girls, policy and programmes should also pay more attention to the views, needs and rights of the millions of young people in Ethiopia who have already experienced early marriage, cohabitation, separation or divorce. Services and programmes should be tailored to provide them with opportunities, safety nets and training, notably in financial literacy, while the stigma towards those who are unmarried or divorced should be countered through conventional and social media.
- Young people's agency over forming relationships and deciding on marriage partners is increasing, but gender norms give more say to boys and young men than girls and young women. Further promotion of adolescent girls' agency in preventing child marriage, and greater decision-making over fertility through school clubs and programmes to reach out-of-school adolescents, using conventional and social media and role models, continue to be important.
- The dominant role of patriarchal gender norms and unequal power relations within marriages need to be countered by promoting awareness of women's rights and gender-based violence through schools, youth groups and media.
- Pregnancy prevention among adolescents and young people needs to be promoted no matter their marriage status, including to improve their access to contraception and safe abortion, notably by enhancing the role of school clubs and health extension services.
- In urban areas, the social risks affecting young people's relationships and intimate lives need to be addressed. The priorities identified by urban youth in this study include: investing in the safety of neighbourhoods and public spaces; promoting responsible use of social media; education, training, and employment; affordable housing for young couples and childcare for families; and sexual and reproductive health and rights, including contraception, provided through schools, health services and youth facilities.
- Neighbourhood threats to young people's well-being, including bars and *shisha* and *khat* houses are believed to push adolescents into risky activities and early pregnancy. Prohibiting these, at least those opened near schools and residential areas, should be considered.
- Parental resource transfers that can help newlywed couples to establish themselves should be encouraged, aided by opportunities for work and affordable housing support for male and female youth. At the same time, practices that lock young couples in debt and weaken their social connections at such a crucial time in their lives should be discouraged.
- Since post-marital relations and decision-making continue to be shaped by patriarchal norms, it is important to create better awareness about women's rights and to promote a fairer division of household labour, greater domestic roles for husbands and child-rearing roles for fathers, and more equal decision-making over property and family planning. Promoting positive images in schools and on social media of shared parenting and young fathers would be useful, as well as promoting research into the economic benefits to households of delaying first pregnancy and of women's paid work and men's contributions to housework.
- Given that many adolescent girls interrupt school and get married and most stop working outside the home, policy and programmes should give greater attention to keeping girls and young women in school, and promoting married women's education, providing them with chances to return to school, and through training, skills development, and employment.
- Further awareness raising and support systems around domestic violence are required. The interaction between male alcohol abuse, financial insecurity and the social isolation of young married women contributes to spousal conflict and amplify female vulnerability. Systems need to be strengthened to protect adolescent girls and young women from sexual violence in communities, and unmarried pregnant girls and single mothers from abuse.
- There is a need to promote greater access for unmarried, divorced and separated women to mother and child services, including childcare facilities and support to ensure their rights to property and child support.

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