



The Socio-Economic Effects of Child Marriage on the Wellbeing of the Girl-Child: An Analysis of the Implementation of Agenda 2030 in Cameroon

Helen Linonge-Fontebo (University of Buea, Cameroon)

Abstract

Socio-cultural and customary laws in Cameroon perpetuate child marriage, given that the civil and common law operate alongside a strong under-current of customary lawsⁱ which sometimes act as a parallel regime to statutory law, thereby compromising the development (SDG 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 16) of girls, resulting in early pregnancy, social isolation, little or no education, poor vocational training/skills, loss of self-esteem and reinforces the gendered nature of poverty. Indicating that boys are also affected by child marriage, but the impact is severe on girls, compounded by the fact that Cameroon has not adhered to Article 6 (b) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on Women, which states a minimum age of marriage at 18 for both boys and girls. Religion is often used to justify child marriage in Cameroon and elsewhere. This explains why it is predominant among the Muslims in the Northern part of Cameroon, where young girls are still sent into marriages with traditional rulers, lamibes, who may have ten or fifteen wives. This practise is also common among the Bacheve, Oliti and Assumbo clans in Akwaya where girls at five, unknowingly are faced with the reality of child marriage at about the age of ten when their supposed suitors come for them.

This paper examines the socio-economic implications of child marriage on the well-being of the girl Childs' education, health and development through documentary and desktop review of literature and concludes by proposing recommendations for ways in which the practice of child marriage can be addressed through the Ministries of Women's Empowerment and the Family, Social Affairs, NGOs/CSOs and other stakeholders in Cameroon.

Keywords: socio-economic, child marriage, wellbeing, girl-child, agenda 2030, development in Cameroon

Purpose

Child marriage is gendered, it affects girls in much greater numbers than boys considering that in primitive communities, an unmarried person as old as seventeen and eighteen was regarded as inadequate, irrespective of whether the person was a boy or girl (Plan International 2013 & Lewis 1982). Although indicators 5.3.1 of SDG 5 measures child marriage among girls, the practice occurs among boys as well perpetuated by gender inequality and unbalanced power relationships at all levels of the society. Child marriage refers to both formal marriages and informal unions in which a girl lives with a male partner as if married before the age of 18 (Arinze-Umobi 2008; UNICEF 2005). In child marriage the consent of the child is ignored and her parents enter into

agreement for her. This often also constitute forced marriage and coercion, given that, children under 18 cannot make informed decision on whom to marry.

Although the United Nation (UN) defines a child as anyone under the age 18, there is no single definition of the term “child” worldwide and there are variations within countries. That is why in some countries a girl is only a child until she begins menstruation and is interpreted as a marriage of a girl who has not yet reached puberty. This explains why some organisations refer to child marriage as “early or forced marriage”. Therefore, forced marriage in this context refers to a marriage “conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and is a marriage in which duress – whether physical or emotional – is a factor” (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Linonge-Fontebo 2018).

According to Judiasih, Sudini, Rubiati, Yanitasari, Kusmayanti & Salim (2019), Al-Qu’ran does not determine a concrete age limit for someone or party who is going to get married. Age is not one of the legal requirements for a marriage. An-Nissa verse 6 “... test the orphan until they are old enough to marry, and if in your opinion they have been intelligent, then give up their possessions”. Based on these provisions, experts stipulate that a person is held accountable for his actions and has the freedom to determine his life after being of sufficient age. A child is considered an adult when he is aqil baligh in Indonesia. Therefore, children who have reached a certain age can distinguish between good and bad. There is no explanation about the exact age when someone is considered an adult to Islamic Law- it is based on maturity on men and women themselves. Fear of falling into adultery which is a taboo pushes people to marry. In other context, child marriage is rooted in gender roles and social expectations, prevailing conceptions about Islamic law, and the fear of falling pregnant before marriage. This is common in the Northern regions of Cameroon where religion and culture prepare the girl child for marriage rather than schooling for chastity.

The goal of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development is gender equality and women’s empowerment and was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the 25-27 September 2015 and centered on 17 SDGs which became effective on 1 January 2016 to complete what the 2000 Millennium Development Goals was not able to achieve in fifteen years. This paper therefore provides an analysis of the relevance of each of the seven targeted SDGs used and its potential for women’s contribution towards it achievement and establishes the extent to which child marriage affects the socio-economic wellbeing of the girl child. Purporting that a violation of women’s human rights through gender inequalities to economic growth, health, education in Africa and elsewhere where child marriage prevails will hamper SDG.

Literature provides that each year, 14 to 15 million girls are married before the age 18 (UNICEF 2012 & UNICEF 2018). The consequence of girls marrying early is that they drop out of school, have more children and are at greater risk of HIV infection and intimate partner violence and face serious health complications and even deaths as a result of early pregnancy and childbearing. Child brides are often widowed, isolated/abandoned and divorced with limited opportunity to participate in the development of their communities. Those who are widowed and isolated are more vulnerable because they typically do not own property (Witheridge & Antonowicz (2014 &

Population Council 2011) Child marriage therefore hampers efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable global development. The purpose and objective of this study is to examine the effects/implication of early marriage on girls' socioeconomic wellbeing in Cameroon which is fundamental if Cameroon wants to eradicate child marriage in all its ramifications in concordance to the recommendation of the SDGs.

Methods

This contribution is based on a documentary analysis of international and national policies to which Cameroon is a signatory and desktop review of key factors involved in the socio-economic well-being of the girl-child through the seven SDGs used. The presentation of this research is descriptive and qualitative in approach using limited ethnographic work. The research employed primary and secondary data from articles, books, international conventions, decisions, documents, reports etc.

Findings: A Desktop Review of Literature

Why Child Marriage is a Concern for Agenda 2030

Currently 650 million women and girls were married as children, indicating that unless efforts are accelerated 150 million more girls will be married by 2030 (Girls not brides 2020; Plan International 2019). It is imperative to address the root causes of child marriage, gender inequality, poverty, insecurity, and the lack of economic and social opportunities for girls. Evidence shows that ending child marriage will catalyse efforts toward achieving SDGs by improving educational attainment, income, and maternal and child health.

Child marriage perpetuates poverty, inequality and insecurity and is a violation of girls' human rights to dignity, welfare and equal access to vital opportunities and services, given that, girls are deprived of their childhood and the option of education and find themselves in adult roles, including forced sex and pressure to bear children early. Hence, they are more likely to experience domestic violence, unhappy conjugal relationships throughout their life cycle. For example, in parts of North India, parents' expectation that the birth of a girl will carry lower social status and high expenditures due to dowry payments at marriage facilitates preference for boy as opposed to girl children often leading to unfavourable birth ratios. Less investment in daughters propagates under-investments in their nutrition and education which perpetuates their dependence on men and their low status (Population Council 2011). Failure to prevent and deal with child marriage will undermine the achievement of a majority of the sustainable development goals (SDG) unless concerted action is taken. Seven of the 17 SDGs used in this paper are analysed below vis-à-vis child marriage.

Efforts to Implement the Sustainable Development Goals in Cameroon vis-à-vis Relationship between the Seven Selected SDGs and Child Marriage

Table 1: SDGs Versus Child Marriage

No. SDG	Objective	Relation to Child Marriage
SDG 1	Eradicate Poverty	<p>According to Onyisi (2018), child marriage is linked to higher household poverty and perpetuates poverty across generations. Often linked to poverty and low levels of economic development. When girls have the skills and opportunities to secure a job and develop their skills they can support themselves and their families and break intergenerational cycles of poverty. The Fourth Cameroonian Survey Households (ECAM4) carried out in 2014, set the monetary poverty line at 738 FCFA per day as mentioned by the UN daily revenue of 1.5 dollars. 37.7% women and 37.2 men live with less than 738 FCFA per day. The poor people cluster around the rural area (56.8%) than the urban areas (8.9%) (Yute 2019:14).</p> <p>Choosing when and who to marry is an important decision the Cameroon government must encourage in eradicating child marriage for girls to dictate their own destinies.</p>
SDG 3	Good health and wellbeing	<p>Action to prevent child marriage and improving married and unmarried adolescent girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services dramatically improve health and development outcomes for millions of girls and children worldwide. This will foster positive outcomes for girls by delaying marriage and motherhood to reduce related high rates of infant mortality.</p> <p>Despite some efforts made by the government and its partners, the ratios of infant mortality and neonatal mortality still persist.</p>
SDG 4	Inclusive and equitable quality Education	<p>Quality education, difficulties in taking proper care of children's nutrition and health. Education is the one of the powerful tools available to prevent child marriage and promote gender equality. It provides protection for girls and also provides them with the knowledge and skills to determine their future.</p>

		The primary completion rate lies at 72.8% for girls and 79.7 for boys in Cameroon (Yute 2019). Girls' completion rate may be improved if child marriage is eradicated.
SDG 5	Gender Equality and Empowerment for all Women and girls	<p>Addressing child marriage can be an entry point to addressing broader gender inequality. By tackling harmful practices and entrenched unequal social norms, we can work towards making sure the voices and decisions of girls and women are as valued as those of boys and men.</p> <p>Early and child marriage though a hindrance to education is still prevalent in Cameroon given that, 10.2% of women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 15 years and 31% before the age of 18. Nearly 3 out of 5 women (59.4%) aged 20-24, with no education were married before the age of 18 (Yute 2019:14).</p>
SDG 8	Economic growth	<p>By ending child marriage and ensuring that adolescent have access to education, information and services they need, they would be able to decide if, when and how many children to have, and increase their educational attainment. This would result in increases in productivity, and enable countries to make significant advances to alleviate poverty and benefit from economic growth. To meet the UN's SDGs, it is important to note that sustained, shared and sustainable economic growth is a prerequisite for prosperity.</p> <p>Cameroon has made strides towards the implementation of this SDG through the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) since 2010 by implementing the MDG's objectives in the 2010-2020 GESP aimed at driving economic growth to an annual average of 5.5%, by cutting underemployment from 75.8% to 50% with the creation of thousand formal jobs per year, reducing income poverty rate from 39.9 to 28.7% (Yute 2019:14).</p>
SDG 10	Reducing inequalities	<p>Reducing inequalities means not leaving anyone behind, no matter where they are and how hard they are to reach. The objective of this SDG is to gradually and sustainably grow the income of the poorest 40% of the population, empower all people and promote their social, economic and political integration, regardless of their profile (Yute 2019:14). Of course, this cannot be achieved if child marriage is increasing. Child marriage widens wealth, income, and gender inequalities as well as inequalities between the Global North and the Global South</p>

		considering that child marriage strives more in the Global South (Onyisi 2018).
SDG 16	Peace, Justice, and strong institutions	Child marriage is a form of violence against women and girls. Girls who marry as children are at risk of sexual, physical, and psychological violence from their partners or their partners' families throughout their lifetime. In cases where there is wider age difference between girls and their husbands, the girls are more likely to experience intimate partner violence than otherwise due to the intersection of power imbalances by gender and age (Onyisi 2018).

Source: Linonge-Fontebo, 2022.

Socio-cultural, religion and customary laws in Cameroon perpetuate child marriage, thereby compromising the development of girls and reinforce the gendered nature of poverty. Indicating that boys are also affected by child marriage but the impact is severe on girls, compounded by the gender differentiation of age to marry in Cameroon Civil Status Registration Ordinance (CSRO) (15 for girls and 18 for boys) in abrogation of Article 6 (b) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of Women, which states a minimum age of marriage at 18 for both boys and girls. Child marriage is predominant among the Muslims in the Northern part of Cameroon, where young girls are still sent into marriages with traditional rulers, lamibes, who may have ten or fifteen wives and common among the Bacheve, Oliti and Assumbo clans in Akwaya where girls at five, unknowingly are faced with the reality at about the age of ten when their supposed suitors come for them (Linonge-Fontebo, 2018).

The appropriate age at marriage facilitates maturity in overcoming problems that will arise in the future and guarantee the rights of the child to welfare, protection, maintenance, and care until adulthood. As mentioned above child marriage for women is endorsed by the Cameroon CSRO when it allows girls to marry at the age of 15 rather than the international minimum age of 18 in defiance of laws it has ratified including the CRC, CEDAW etc. Child marriage negatively affects girls more likely to marry as children than boys. Given that, early and forced marriages hamper education, psychological wellbeing, health because the child has the right to education needed for personal development, preparation for adults and effective contributions to the welfare of the family and society in the future (Judiasih et al. 2019). Child marriage endangers the health of young women and reproductive health, and it is a violation of children's rights and has a negative impact on physical growth, health, mental and emotional development and educational opportunities, a problem faced almost all over the world. The United Nations (UN) addresses and overcome child marriage by working tirelessly with member countries to implement the SDGs related to it.

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (SD) was adopted at the UN General Assembly Summit on 25-27 September 2015 and became effective on the 1 January 2016. This agenda centres on 17 sustainable development goals with 169 targets, and a universal call for action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. The SDGs are one of the processes

for achieving SD that will be applied to each country that agrees to implement it. SDGs build on the MDGs, which began global efforts in 2000 and hope to complete what was not achieved under the MDGs set targets in the set time frame of 15 years (Onyisi 2018).

The UN's 5th objective talks of "achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls". This objective states that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also an effort to achieve world peace and prosperity. This coincides with the third target addressing the elimination of all dangerous practices, such as child marriage, forced marriage and female circumcision". However, the Cameroon CSRO allows the marriage of girls under the age of 15 if for "serious reasons a waiver has been granted by the president of the republic." This is in disregard of international and regional commitments Cameroon says it is part and parcel of the constitution.

If Cameroon must address and reduce gender inequalities and injustice there is a need to enact the draft Child Protection Code and Family Planning Code, which stipulate the age of marriage for girls at 18 years old and establishes other protections for women and girls.

The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family which is the main national women's machinery in the country focuses mostly on women in urban and semi-urban towns, where they have offices, and disregard rural women, who form the bulk of women with limited financial means. It is necessary to improve awareness and accountability so that laws are understood at the local level and accompanied by meaningful rural programs to ensure that rural women are not left behind.

Cameroon has made strides toward gender equality and the empowerment of women through major international commitments – Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), that states that, the betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect and all necessary action, including legislation shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage (CEDAW 1981). The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Declaration of Heads of States and Government of the African Union on equality between women and men, and the sustainable development goals. However, though these international regional commitments take precedence over Cameroon's national laws, customs, and traditions, the preference for customary laws remains, and means that discrimination against women continues in Cameroon, especially in rural areas. Moreover, the preamble of the constitution of Cameroon includes several provisions that enshrine gender equality. But many questions about inequalities faced by women continue to linger, such as the continuation of child marriage.

Research Implications

Causes of Early Marriage in Cameroon and in Africa

If the seven SDGs in this study have to be eliminated before 2030, there is a need to understand the causes and the effects of child marriage on girls' socioeconomic wellbeing and propose solutions on how to overcome it. The following are some of the reasons for child marriage:

1. Conflicts, Disasters, and emergencies

Food insecurity sometimes results to hasty marriages arranged by parents for girls to marry against their will. Emergencies and disasters increase economic pressure on families which escalate to early and forced marriages. Floods in the Northern parts of Cameroon, droughts and disagreements in Afghanistan have forced farmers to arrange and receive money for early matrimony of their daughters (Adamec in Ganira et al. 2015).

2. Poverty

According to Ganira et al. (2015) girls from needy households are more likely to be victims of early marriages. Poverty alongside the traditional practice of son preference influences parents to take sons to school rather than daughters in circumstances of economic constraints. High level of poverty in a community may compromise young girl's education. Economic factors are responsible for underage marriage in Indonesia (Judiasih et al. 2019). Families sometimes feel that releasing a woman to marry, reduces the burden of responsibility of the male family or the husband who marries her. Young marriage sometimes may be a bridge of social change for women.

3. Gender Inequality

Women and girls assume lower societal status emanating from cultural and traditional beliefs. Such beliefs suppress girls' capability to participate in equal roles in society. Once women and girls are denied access to education, they develop into uneducated adults with inadequate tools and resources for future generation of educated women (Ganira et al. 2015).

4. Weak legislatures

While nations have legalised right to marriage, including minimum age and consent, these laws may be applied and few prosecutions brought against law breakers. Consequently, marriage is not considered directly in the rights of the child. Practitioners regard other rights (e.g. health, education, life, development and survival) or CRC general principles such as interests of the child.

5. Traditional and Religious practices

Cultural practices among the Luos have led to boys and girls being married of at a tender age in areas where people still follow traditional rules and regulations. The Luos also believe that a girl who has reached puberty and dies before she is married and is not deflowered will remain a malevolent ghost, causing barrenness to all of her female kinsfolk. It is said that the dead will return to reproach the living unmarried girls in visions and in dreams and ask them "why did our father and our brothers allow me to go into the grave without tasting the joy of man?" (Ogutu in Ganira; Inda; Odundo; Akondo; & Ngaruiya 2015:75).

Cultural factors of people's minds that are not open or who believe in old myths that if a girl is not married in a certain period or age she will not sell well or will not have a mate and not marry in the future. The myth of not getting married when you reject the first application from a male is also a factor parents are afraid to reject applications without considering the child's age. Such believe systems are an obstacle to the elimination of early marriage especially in rural areas.

Furthermore, it avoids adultery, besides being a recommendation from religion, parents encourage their children to get married instead of dating.

6. Parenting factor

Lack of advice given to children regarding the dangers of getting married at a young age and life in undergoing a household with a relatively young age and the dominant role of parents in determining the marriage of girls, considering the assumption that children belong so that children especially girls must be obedient to their parents (Astuty in Judiasih et al. 2019).

7. Education

The education of the person who carried out the early marriage. The higher the level of education of a person, of course the higher the desire to work, career, and reach the aspirations of that person. Moreover, someone who is educating must also want to complete his education first.

8. Pregnancy outside of marriage

Due to promiscuity of relationships and the ways of dating teenagers and having a relationship between husband and wife outside of marriage forces marriage to occur without looking at someone's marriage age. The family encourages marriage to take place in such circumstances without thinking.

9. Emotional and environmental factors

Couples being carried away without thinking about mental, economic, and future readiness make a person want to get married which also influence the consequences of divorce carried out by early age couples. Also, a teenager tends to follow the surrounding social environment – following peers or associates who carry out early marriage.

From the above it is evident that the causes of child marriage are complex and systematic, ranging from inequality and poverty to customary practices and the practice is a form of violence and a development challenge that robs 14 million girls under the age 18 each year and by 2020, it was estimated that 142 million girls will be married by their 18th birthday if current trends continue (UNICEF 2012). This frustrates the future of girls and holds them and their countries back from achieving their potential.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality (Pathania in Judiasih 2019). Gender differences give birth to the manifestations of injustice. Gender inequality does not only exist because of traditions and beliefs held by the community but due to the systems and rules that are applied to result in the planting of an understanding of the community that the position of women is lower than that of men and existence of policies that harm women (Judiasih et al. 2019). The Civil Status Registration Ordinance (CSRO), Article 52 of Order No. 81-02 of 29 June 1981 in Cameroon states that, "No marriage may take place if the girl is younger than 15 or the boy younger than 18, unless the president of the Republic grants an exemption for a serious reason...." This legislation regarding the minimum age for marriage harbours elements of gender differences, inequalities and injustice between men and women, when the marriage law stipulates 18 years for boys and 15 years for girls. There is no reason strong enough to warrant the president's endorsement of child marriage for girls and not for boys. The minimum age for marriage in Cameroon contradicts section 356 of the Cameroon Penal Code that criminalises forced marriage. In fact, there is need for the harmonisation of these laws unless Cameroon does not view child marriage as forced marriage.

The Socioeconomic Effects/Implications of Child Marriage

Child brides end up with a high rate of illiteracy because the time they would have been using to go to school is spent at home as housewife. Child marriage is associated with lower education and economic status of girls. Child brides are less able than older or unmarried girls to access schooling and income generating opportunities or benefit from education or economic development programmes. Girls already in school are often forced to terminate their education when they marry early. Therefore child marriage excludes or prevents further education of girls and reinforces poverty. Limited mobility, household responsibilities, pregnancy, raising children and other social restrictions for married girls prevent them from taking advantage of education or work opportunities. Education is widely credited as the most significant factor for delaying girls' age of marriage.

Child/early marriage has serious health, economic and social implications for young brides, for the well-being of the family, and for society as a whole. It poses many dangers to young girls' health, which includes complications during early pregnancy and multiple births, which can lead to reproductive health risks, especially obstetric fistula and infant and maternal death. Child brides are susceptible to suffer from anaemia than adults, which greatly increases the risk and complications linked to pregnancy and eclampsia than women who wait until the age of 20 to bear children (Mathur, Greene & Malhotra 2003). Most babies of mothers younger than 18 tend to be premature and have low body weight, and such babies are likely to die in the first year of life. Obstetric fistula is among the worst of the neonatal health outcomes. Most often girls suffering from fistulas are abandoned by their husbands and become social outcasts from their communities. Complications from pregnancy can affect social wellbeing, for example, leading limited autonomy and decision-making ability and reduced opportunities to develop psychological and social skills necessary to make strategic decisions and life choices in young brides.

Child marriage also exacerbate the spread of HIV/AIDS and STDs from older husbands and lead to unwanted pregnancies, premature births, and other pregnancy – related complications which may result to death. Spousal age difference reinforce the powerlessness of the girl, because older husbands of child brides are sexually experienced, and having had more sexual partners in their lifetime increases the chances that they maybe HIV positive. The age difference between the child bride and her spouse is further compounded by power imbalance between women and men and makes open communication about sexual relations; including condom use difficult (Linonge-Fontebo 2018).

Another implication of child marriage is that it robs girls of their childhood-time necessary to develop physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Early/child marriage inflicts great emotional stress, as the young woman is removed from her parents' home to that of her husband and in-laws (LUKMEF 2015). The girl has to put up with a man many years older than her, and has to develop an intimate emotional and physical relationship with a man she has nothing in common with. Child brides have to perform heavy domestic chores, being under pressure to demonstrate fertility and responsible for raising children while being children themselves.

Limitations

The insecurity in the South West (Ambazonian crisis) and Northern (Boko Haram) Regions of Cameroon where child marriage prevails was major difficulty in collecting primary data. The data was essentially documentary and exploratory that warrants that the need to describe and explain the real life experiences of women and girls. The information is principally based on qualitative analogy. A more detailed investigation with qualitative and quantitative information will definitely give more insights into what is largely a reflection that is meant to inform action.

Originality and Value of the Paper

African Union member states committed to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development relevant to promoting gender equality, women and girls human rights and specifically ending child marriage. SDGs are relevant to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and recognition and valuing of women's contributions are critical to achieving this goal and other related target and indicators. A conducive environment that removes barriers faced by girls must be created.

Agenda 2030 emphasises that SDGs are interrelated and ensures the integration across all 17 objectives is essential to achieving sustainable development. Secondly, each SDG can be characterised as objectives that are primarily linked to either the economic, environmental, or social system.

The well-being of the girl-child stands out as one of the twelve critical areas examined by The Beijing Declaration, to which public policies have benefitted women in Cameroon. The SDGs are welcomed in Cameroon through the National Development Plan and the scope to be an emerging nation in 2035. To transform Cameroon into an emerging nation by 2035 warrants poverty

reduction, consolidation of the democratic process and national unity in keeping with the diversity of the country linked to the SDGs. Despite efforts made by the government through the National Action Plan, Ministries of Women's Empowerment and the Family, Social Affairs and NGOs/CSOs in Cameroon towards addressing child marriage, a lot needs to be done to translate international commitments and financing to contract realisation of Agenda 2030.

All the causes of child/early marriage, for instance socialisation has to be addressed in order to reduce child marriage. From a feminist perspective, the sexual victimisation of girls is a function of male socialisation because so many young males learn how to be aggressive and exploitative of women. This exploitation of young girls by older men triggers delinquent behaviour such as running away from home and prostitution, among girls who are victims of men's aggression (Judiasih et al.2019:61). There is therefore need for concerted efforts from traditional rulers, religious leaders, NGOs, CSOs, researchers and communities to fight child marriage.

References

Arinze-Umobi, D.C. (2008), Domestic violence against women in Nigeria: a legal anatomy
Onitcha: Folmech Printing and Publications and Pub. Co. Ltd.

Cameroon Penal Code. Law No. 65-LF of 12 November 1965 and Law No. 67-LF-1 of 12 June 1967, revised in 2016, sec. 356.

Ganira, K.L.; Inda, A.N; Odundo, P.A; Akondo, J.O; & Ngaruiya, B. (2015), Early and forced marriage on girls education, in Migori County, Kenya: Constraints, Prospects and policy. World Journal of Education, Sciendu Press: Nairobi. Vol.5:4, Pp 72-80.

Girls not brides (2020). Girls not brides: The global partnership

Judiasih, S. D., Sudini, L.P., Rubiati, B., Yanitasari, D., Kusmayanti, H., & Salim, E.F. (2019), *Sustainable development goals and elimination of children's marriage practice in Indonesia*. Journal of Notariil, Vol.4 No.1, pp. 52-64.

Lewis, J. (1982). Anthropology made simple. London: William Heinemann.

Linonge-Fontebo, H.N. (2018), Socio-cultural, Economical and Organisational Determinants of Child Marriage in Cameroon, in Christian Green M., Jeremy Gunn T. and Mark Hill (Eds.), . Religion, Law and Security in Africa, ACLARS: African SUN MeDIA, pp. 351-366.

LUKMEF-Cameroon (2015). Break the silence: Community Manual on ending gender based violence. Limbe: LUKMEF.

Mathur, S., Greene, M., & Malhotra, A. (2003). Too young to wed: The lives, rights and health of young married girls. Washington, DC: ICRW. Online at: <https://www.icrw.org/publications/too-young-to-wed-2>.

Onyisi, J.A. (2018). Analysis of child marriage and sustainable development goals. 5. <https://ssrn.com/abstract/3329179>.

Plan International (2013). A girl's right to say no to marriage: Working to end child marriage and keep girls in school.

Plan International (2019). 150 million girls are at risk of child marriage by 2030: The time to Act is now. <https://plan-international.org>

Population Council (2011). When girls' lives matter: Ending forced and early marriage in Cameroon. <http://www.popcouncil.org>

Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted by the Ordinary session of the Assembly of the Union, Maputo, CAB/LEG/66.6 (Sept. 13, 2000); reprinted in 1 Afr. Hum. Rts. L.J. 40, entered into force Nov. 25, 2005. Online at: <http://www.acgpr.org/instruments/women-protocol> [hereinafter AU Women's Protocol].

Republic of Cameroon, Civil Status Registration Ordinance, Article 52 of Order No. 81-02 of 29 June 1981.

UNICEF (2005). Early marriage: A harmful traditional practice. New York: Unicef.

UNICEF (2012). Partnering with religious communities for children. Online at: https://www.unicef.org/eapro/partnering_with_Religious_Communities_for_Children.pdf

UNICEF (2012). Child marriage: Latest trends and future prospects. data.unicef.org.

United Nations Foundations (2017). Ending inequality against women in Cameroon. By Jude Thaddues Njikem

Wetheridge L. and Antonowicz L. (2014). Child marriage in West Africa and Cameroon: A desk review. Plan Waro. Online at: <https://www.frauenrechte.de/online/images/downloads/fruehehen/Plan-Waro-Child-Marriage.pdf>

Yute, I. T. (2019). Sustainable development goals (SDG's) in Cameroon sustainable development goals in Cameroon. University Dissertation: Istabul Sehir University.

ⁱ Customary law is part of Cameroon's law pursuant to the provisions of section 27 of the Southern Cameroons High Court Law 1955, indicating that the High Courts shall "observe" and "enforce the observance" of customary law insofar as it is not repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience or contrary to the written law. Despite the illegality of child marriage (forced marriage) under section 356 of the Cameroon Penal Code and its negative impact on development it is still tolerated in the name of culture (Cameroon's New Gender Policy Document: 35).