



SCHOOL

EMPLOYMENT

ADULT MARRIAGE/
HEALTHY CHILDREN

SECURITY
OF PLACE

WORK-LIFE
BALANCE

LIFELONG
LEARNING

WEALTH/CHILD
INVESTMENT

SECURE
OLD-AGE

DEMOGRAPHIC
DIVIDEND



Photo: UNFPA/Aleksandar Milovanovski

“I do not have plans to get married young. I would like to finish my education first”

Child marriage

Gjulsefa, 10, lives with her brother and parents in Skopje, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Her father works as a municipality worker and her mother as a cleaner in Gjulsefa's school. The family lives in Shuto Orizari, a neighbourhood predominantly inhabited by Roma. Gjulsefa speaks her native Roma language at home, but loves the Macedonian language and wants to become a Macedonian teacher.

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QR CODE

CHILD
MARRIAGE

TEENAGE
PREGNANCY

REPEAT
PREGNANCIES

CHILD ILLNESS
& DEATH

MATERNAL
MORBIDITY

INFORMAL
WORK

INSECURITY &
DISPLACEMENT

INSECURE
OLD-AGE

MISSED
DEMOGRAPHIC
DIVIDEND



Child marriage is rooted in, and perpetuates, a lack of value placed on girls.

A person who marries later is more likely to stay in school, work, and reinvest income into her or his family.

→ The situation

Child marriage is common in parts of the region, in particular in the Balkans and Turkey, and appears to be on the increase in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Reliable data is hard to come by, as child marriage is generally illegal, often practiced informally, and therefore not officially registered.

→ Why is it important?

Child marriage is harmful to girls and limits their prospects in life. Getting married early generally means the girls have to leave school, in particular if they get pregnant. This severely restricts their ability to fulfil their potential. And what often begins as a forced arrangement, in many cases leads to exploitation and violence in the households they end up in. Early marriage also often means early child-bearing, with all the additional risks associated for the teenage mother and her baby.



→ Leaving no-one behind

Intersecting with social exclusion, tradition, poverty and geographic isolation, child marriage is more common among rural communities and among some minority groups, especially Roma. In Serbia, for example, 57% of Roma women were married before age 18 (compared to less than 7% in the overall population); 17% even before age 15¹.

→ What needs to be done?

We need far greater engagement in challenging people's attitudes about child marriage and, more broadly, the status of women and girls. Without this grassroots engagement, including with faith leaders, little will change, and large numbers of girls will continue to see their futures cut off by child marriage.



¹ Serbia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, UNICEF, 2014.