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Child Marriage and Child Solider Policies in Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger

Mawlia Meh

University of Northern Iowa

Lexie Hauber

University of Northern Iowa

See next page for additional authors

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Author

Mawlia Meh, Lexie Hauber, Morgan Kline, and Ramiyah Boyed

Child Marriage and Child Solider Policies in Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger

By: Mawlia Meh, Lexie Hauber, Morgan Kline, Ramiyah Boyed
University of Northern Iowa

Abstract

- Every year 650 millions women are being forced into marriage before the age of 18.
- In countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger young girls around the age of 15 and younger are forced into marriage and young boys at the age of 5 are often forced and kidnapped to become soldiers.
- In 2005 and 2022, more than 105,000 children were recruited and used by parties to conflict.
- These problems are happening due to the lack of resources faced in these countries.
- Can lead to many health effects including depression, sexually transmitted infections, cervical cancer, malaria, obstetric fistulas, and maternal mortality
- The goal of the study is to assess if the current political or welfare system can provide the necessary protection for the children harmed.

Introduction

- Forced marriage and child recruitment into armed conflicts are serious problems happening worldwide. They take away children's rights and cause them a lot of pain, both physically and emotionally.
- This aim of this study is to discuss how significant this issue is, how common it is globally, and how much harm it causes children, especially in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger.
- Over 650 million women have been forced into marriage before the age of 18, with young girls as young as 15 or even younger often being the victims. This means one in every five girls is married before age 18. Alongside forced marriage, the recruitment of children, particularly boys, into armed conflicts remains an issue.
- While the Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger serve as key points due to their high prevalence rates of forced marriage, and child recruitment. These issues occur in various forms across different countries and continents.
- The socio-economic, political, and cultural factors underlying these practices vary, but the result is the same. The impact of child marriage includes the risk of death from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, poverty, being under-educated, the possibility of contracting HIV/AIDS, and the likelihood of becoming a victim of domestic violence. The impact of forced marriage and child recruitment on children's rights and well-being cannot be overlooked.
- **These practices violate children's rights to freedom, education, health, and protection from harm.** Similarly, children recruited into armed conflicts endure unimaginable experiences, including exposure to violence, trauma, and exploitation.

Objective

- Assess if the current political or welfare system can provide the necessary protection for the children harmed.
- Examine whether the current political and welfare systems in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger can offer protection for children who are being harmed and forced into marriage and children recruitment in arm forces.
- Identify areas for improvement and advocate for policy change.
- We also aim to contribute to the global effort to reduce forced marriage and child recruitment and create a safer and well-protected environment for all children.

Democratic Republic of Congo

- Minimum age of marriage of 18 for women and 21 for men; however, a court may permit underage marriages for "serious reasons" if parents also consent to the marriage. When these exceptions are taken into account, there is no minimum age of marriage
- 29% of girls in DRC are married before their 18th birthday
- 8% married before the age of 15 years
- **Ending child marriage in DRC can generate an additional USD 169 million in earnings and productivity**
- Gender inequality and the belief that girls are inferior to boys
- Reason for child marriage
 - Poverty: rural and poor areas are at high risk. 13% of women and 3% of men
 - Negotiate the practice of bride to meet economic pressure
 - Leads to lower their perceived "worth" in the community and society
- Cultural norm: traditional attitude
 - Considering that women should have children as soon as they menstruate
- Level of education
 - 14% of women (3% of men) with no education and married before the age of 18
 - 6% of women and men who have completed higher education
- Adolescent pregnancy
 - Highest fertility rate among adolescents in the world
 - Expected to become a mother and wife at a young age
- Committed to eliminating child, early, and forced marriage by 2030 in line with target 5.3 of the sustainable development goal
- the government submitted a Voluntary National Review at the 2020 High Level Political Forum but there was no mention of child marriage.
- The DRC co-sponsored the 2013 Human Rights Council resolution on child, early, and forced marriage, and signed a joint statement at the 2014 Human Rights Council calling for a resolution on child marriage
- The DRC ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990: minimum age of marriage of 18
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1986: to ensure free and full consent to marriage.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 116 of the Labor Code; Article 68 of the Child Protection Code (22.23)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 4-5 and 8-9 of Order 2224 of 1953; Article 68 of the Child Protection Code (23.24)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 4-5 and 8-9 of Order 2224 of 1953 (24)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 33 of the Constitution; Article 4 of the Labor Code; Articles 60, 68, 115, and 122 of the Child Protection Code (22.23.25)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Articles 60 and 115 of the Child Protection Code (23)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 60, 65-68, and 122 of the Child Protection Code; Articles 334-335 of the Penal Code (23.26)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 68-70 and 122 of the Child Protection Code (23)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	No		Article 49 of the Child Protection Code (23)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes*		Article 49 of the Child Protection Code (23)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 49 of the Child Protection Code (23)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Articles 1 and 3 of the Education Law; Article 29 of the Constitution (25.27)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 1 of the Education Law; Article 29 of the Constitution (25.27)

* No conscription (28)

NIGER

Child Labor

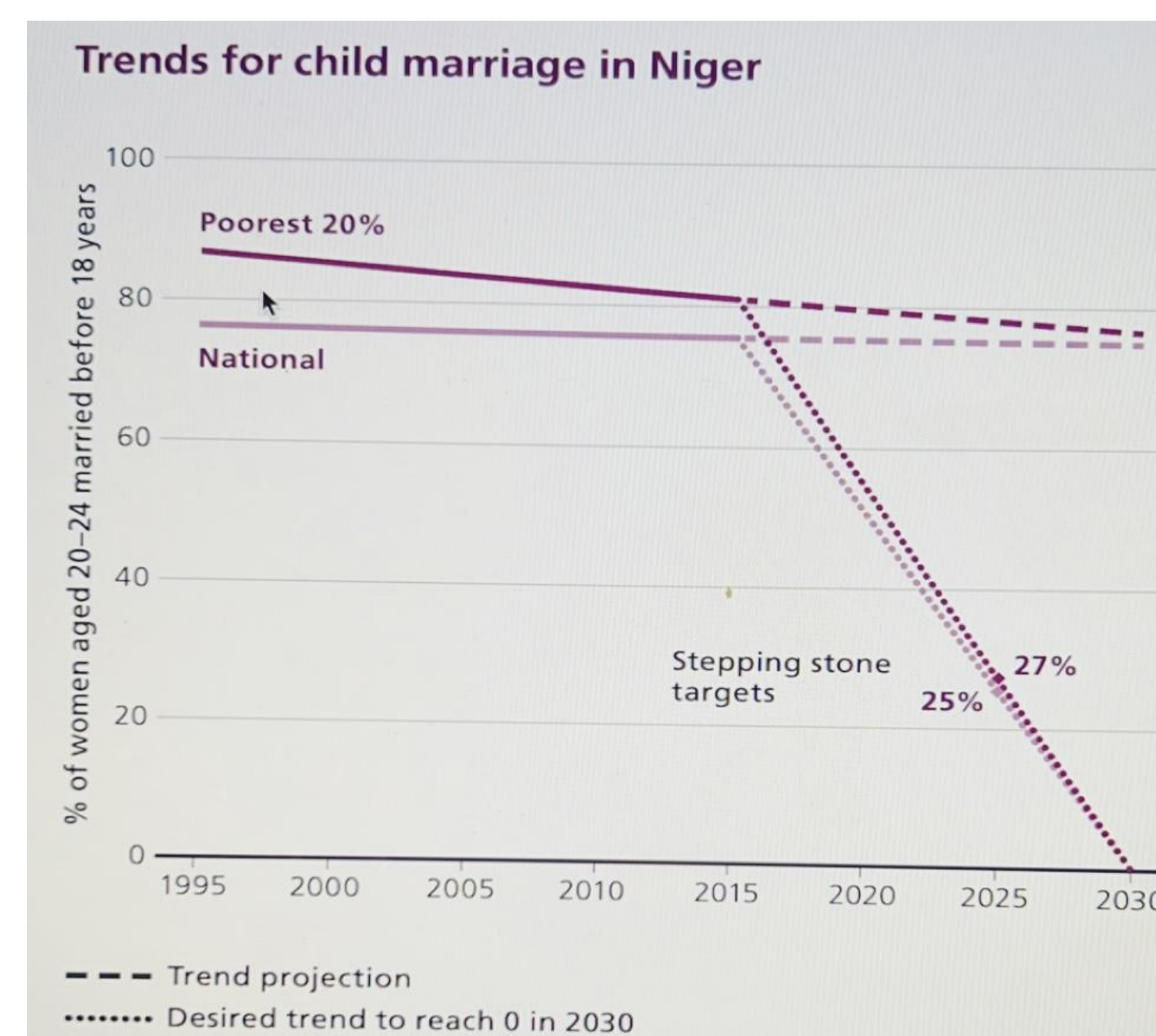
- In 2019, Niger's supreme court ruled that wahaya, one of the worst forms of child labor is illegal
- The Law for the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons establishes special protections
 - Penalties 15 to 30 years
 - Monetary fine of \$3,400 to \$8,600

Child Marriage

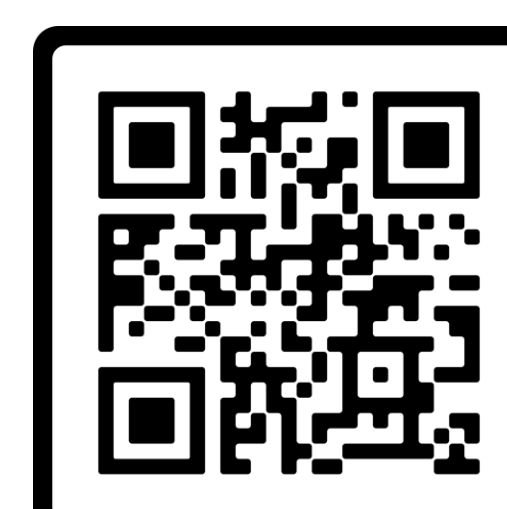
- Niger Civil Code made a law that girls 15 years old and boys 18 years old and older are legally able to get married
- Polygamous marriages happen to most young married girls, 18.6% of young females who are married are between the ages of 15-19 years old
- By 2025 the goal is to meet the stepping-stone target
 - 27% for the disadvantaged economic group (instead of 60% if the current trend continues)
 - 28% for girls in rural areas (instead of 82% if the current trend continues)

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

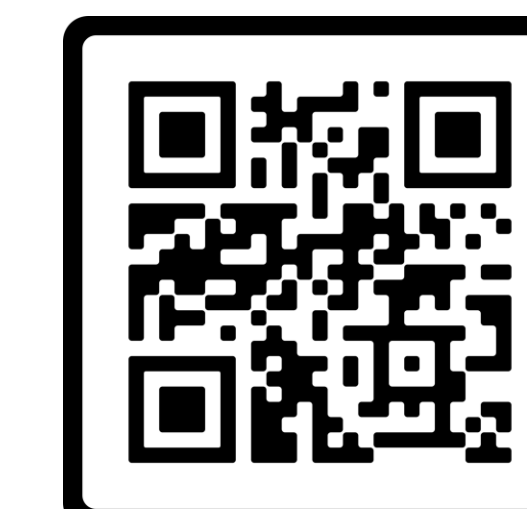


Brochure



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References



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Resources

Congo

- Debut Fille wants to take an approach that's innovative to end child marriage through digital technology with a program called "Digital Learning clubs and spaces" that gives young girls education about their reproductive and sexual rights and health.
- Also, they have a program called "Parents schools" that lets the parents get better educated on how to support and protect their daughter.
- These two programs help the young girls set up another program called "Girls Parliaments" where they can participate in community and political advocacy to stop child marriage.
- The programs that they have provided do not put an end to child marriage.
- They programs would have to be supported with money which most of the families don't have.

Niger

- UNICEF works to prevent child marriage by working with adolescents, religious leaders, communities, and women's organizations. Harmful gender norms are being addressed and UNICEF supports communities and national efforts.
- Due to partnerships 3 million people including 1.6 million children were able to be supported and given resources. Food assistance, water and sanitation, and child protective services are resources vulnerable families are given. Families that have been affected by conflict are receiving income opportunities, healthcare, and schools that have clean water.
- Services for adolescents and teenage mothers are not adapting to their needs.
- Niger lacks quality services and low government funding.

Result

- When looking into the policies of child marriage and child labor in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger we found it hard to find specific policies.
- Two countries made laws that can help protect children until they are at a certain age, but these laws have very minimal protection.
- Children not only face horrible treatment from marriage and labor, but they lose their chance to get a good education, basic health, and just basic protection from their families.
- Save the Children services include creating positive norms, addressing gender bias, building classrooms, providing learning materials for basic education, and training communities and leaders how to answer to violence.
- By helping fund the organization Parent Schools in Congo you'll give the parents a chance to get the knowledge to be advocates for their daughters to take action to end child marriage.
- Together by giving to this program 240 community leaders will get the training for the digital technology used to prevent child marriage. 1,200 girls could be able to lead a different society.

Discussion

- Why do you think child marriage is still happening?
- If you were put in the position to help this population, what would you do differently?
- What solutions can your country do to help?