Worldwide, more than 75 million young women aged 20 to 24 years, a quarter of them in Africa, entered their first marriage or union before 18 years old.

If current trends continue, almost half of the world’s child brides in 2050 will be African.

PREVALENCE OF CHILD MARRIAGE

Child marriage is practiced in Africa with serious consequences on the rights and welfare of girls.

PREVALENCE OF CHILD MARRIAGE BY COUNTRY

Obtained from UNICEF global databases, 2018, based on DHS, MICS and other national surveys from 2010 to 2017

- **Egypt**: Married by 18 years - 17%, Married by 15 years - 2%
- **South Sudan**: Married by 18 years - 52%, Married by 15 years - 9%
- **Tanzania**: Married by 18 years - 31%, Married by 15 years - 5%
- **Angola**: Married by 18 years - 30%, Married by 15 years - 8%
- **Niger**: Married by 18 years - 76%, Married by 15 years - 26%
- **Central African Republic**: Married by 18 years - 68%, Married by 15 years - 23%
- **Democratic Republic of Congo**: Married by 18 years - 37%, Married by 15 years - 18%
- **Mozambique**: Married by 18 years - 45%, Married by 15 years - 14%
AFRICA HAS TAKEN STEPS TO ADDRESS CHILD MARRIAGE

A key continental initiative is the African Union (AU) Campaign to End Child marriage which catalyzed, among others, multi-stakeholder collaborations at different levels.

Africa has also made normative advances through the adoption of legal and policy instruments to end child marriage in the continent.

CONTINENTAL LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

- **1999**
  - African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

- **2003**
  - Maputo Protocol on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa

- **2006**
  - African Youth Charter
  - Continental Policy Framework (CPF) on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

- **2009**
  - African Union Social Policy Framework

- **2010**
  - Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa

- **2014**
  - Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa

- **2014-2017**
  - 5th Strategic Priority of African Union’s Strategic Plan

- **2016-2030**
  - Maputo Plan of Action

- **2019**
  - African Union’s Agenda 2063

- **2020-2030**
  - The African Women’s Decade

- **2023**
  - The Charter for African Cultural Renaissance

- **2025**
  - African Union’s Agenda 2063
Near to universal establishment

Several efforts were made to address the issue over the years. The most significant change that has occurred through these efforts is the near-universal establishment of the minimum age of marriage at 18 years.

Good practices

There are notable good practices in countries like Botswana, Egypt and Gambia where minimum of age of marriage is 18 with no exceptions. Zimbabwe and Tanzania also offer a good example where courts have ruled against marriages under 18 years. Some counties like Zambia have also adopted constitutional prohibitions against marriage under 18 years.

Marriage Laws that set a minimum age of marriage at 18 years old and above without exemptions and contradictions serve as an important tool to safeguard girls from early marriage.
# RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the Africa Common Position on Ending Child Marriage and other key commitments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute a minimum age of marriage law at 18 years old where none exists or is ambiguous and amend laws with lower ages of marriage to bring them to 18 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove all contradictions and ambiguity in marriage laws by harmonizing civil, customary and religious laws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enact strong laws punishing offenders and amend laws exempting or providing light punishment for offenders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen the capacity of the legislature and law enforcement organs through trainings and other capacity building initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute and strengthen birth and marriage registration system at all levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage traditional, religious and community leaders in the development and implementation of programs and interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen the documentation and dissemination of best practices and research to promote the elimination of discriminatory marriage and family laws in Africa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Compendium from Marriage Laws across 55 African Union Member States was developed by the AUC-Department of Social Affairs with the support and partnership of UN Women and Plan International African Union Liaison and Pan Africa Program Office.