

Children in the news:
Rural Ethiopia Ignores Law against child brides.

Wilson, Brenda, "Rural Ethiopia Ignores Law against Child Brides." NPR on the Web 15 Jan. 2007. 27 March 2007 <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6560441>.

In Yinsa a small village in Ethiopia, there has recently been much debate about old traditions and new policies from the government. One policy that is heavily debated is that of child brides. The Ethiopian government is backing new policies which support family planning. These policies include a ban on the practice of marrying girls when they are children.

According to Mamo a worker at Ethiopia's national Association on Traditional Practices, childhood marriages is prevalent especially in rural areas of the country. Yinsa is one of these rural villages. Mamo says that some girls are married as young as three. In 1995 the government passed a law which made the minimum age for marriage 18. However, since the passing of this law, child marriages have continued.

Marriages in Ethiopia are used as alliances between families. They can provide economic and social opportunities for families by increasing a family's wealth in cattle and raising their social status within the community. When a girl is married young, it guarantees that she will be a virgin when married. If a girl loses her virginity before marriage, it becomes impossible for her to find a husband.

There are risks for girls who are highly desirable as marriage partners, because of their wealth and social status. They become victims of rape and kidnapping by men who are of lower status. The undesirable male will take the girl to improve his social standing. These actions force the girl's family to accept marriage with the objectionable mate. Many fathers in the village see early marriage as a way to protect their daughters from these hazards. Another risk

facing parents is if their daughter is not married, but her friends are, people in the village think that there is something wrong with her and will not seek her in marriage.

Girls in these societies have no options when it comes to choosing a mate. Marriages are arranged for them by their parents. In the article it stated that girls who marry younger are more prone to be abused by their husbands. They are also more likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS. About 1/3 of the women in developing countries were married as children.

Some women in these societies are making a stand and forming groups for women's protection. In these groups women learn about health, birth control, protection against HIV/AIDS, and how to protect their own property.