Early marriage, pregnancy and girl child school dropout

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K4D Helpdesk Report

Description:
The aim of this review was to present the recent evidence on the impact of early marriage and/or pregnancy on the rates of girl child drop out. It also synthesises evidence that focus on laws, policies and practices that force pregnant girls or new mothers out of school. Although early marriage and pregnancy are often linked to school dropout, evidence proving a direct and causal link is limited. This is because early marriage and pregnancy can be both the cause and consequence of dropping out of school. Girls certainly leave or are taken out of school because they are pregnant or married, but girls who have already dropped out of school are more likely to marry and/or become pregnant. There is a significant body of evidence looking at the links between early pregnancy (often outside of marriage) and school dropout in Sub-Saharan Africa, and there are some studies that consider the relationship between early marriage (and resulting early pregnancies) and school drop out in South Asia. While it is clear that early pregnancy and marriage play an important part in girl child school dropout, the different perimeters of available studies, combined with a lack of robust, comparable national data, and the fact that early marriage and pregnancy, as well as school dropout, are so interlinked with socioeconomic inequalities and unequal gender norms, means it is difficult to make simple causal assumptions about exactly how early marriage and pregnancy influence school dropout. K4D helpdesk reports provide summaries of current research, evidence and lessons learned. This report was commissioned by the UK Department for International Development.

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