

**Child Marriage:**  
*Social and Economic*  
*Linkages*  
*and*  
*Opportunities for*  
*Intervention*

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## **Child Marriage Undermines Economic Development and the Achievement of the MDGs**

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- Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4 Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5 Improve maternal health
- Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

## **Economic Motivations for Child Marriage**

- Marriage is an economic transaction
- Costs are lower when marriage occurs at an early age
- Child marriage is caused by the tyranny of poverty

## The Link is Clear

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- It is no coincidence that the same countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East that have high rates of child marriage are also those with:
  - High poverty rates, birth rates, death rates.
  - Greater incidence of conflict and civil strife
  - Lower levels of overall development, including schooling, employment, health care.

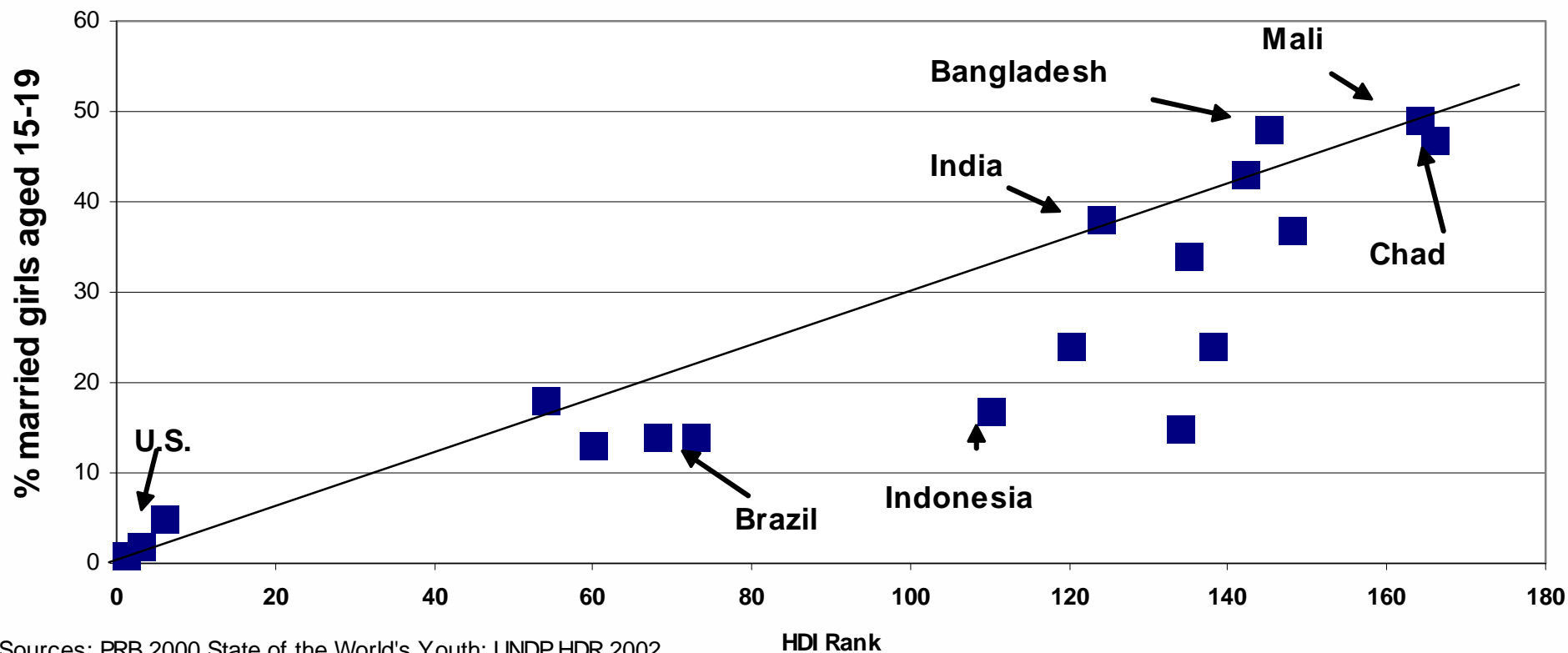
## **And, conversely....**

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The East Asian “Miracles” like Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, that have successfully eradicated the harmful traditional practice of child marriage, are characterized by:

- Economic growth and opportunity
- Declines in birth and death rates
- Increases in educational and employment options for girls

# Child Marriage and Rank on Human Development Index (HDI)



Sources: PRB 2000 State of the World's Youth; UNDP HDR 2002

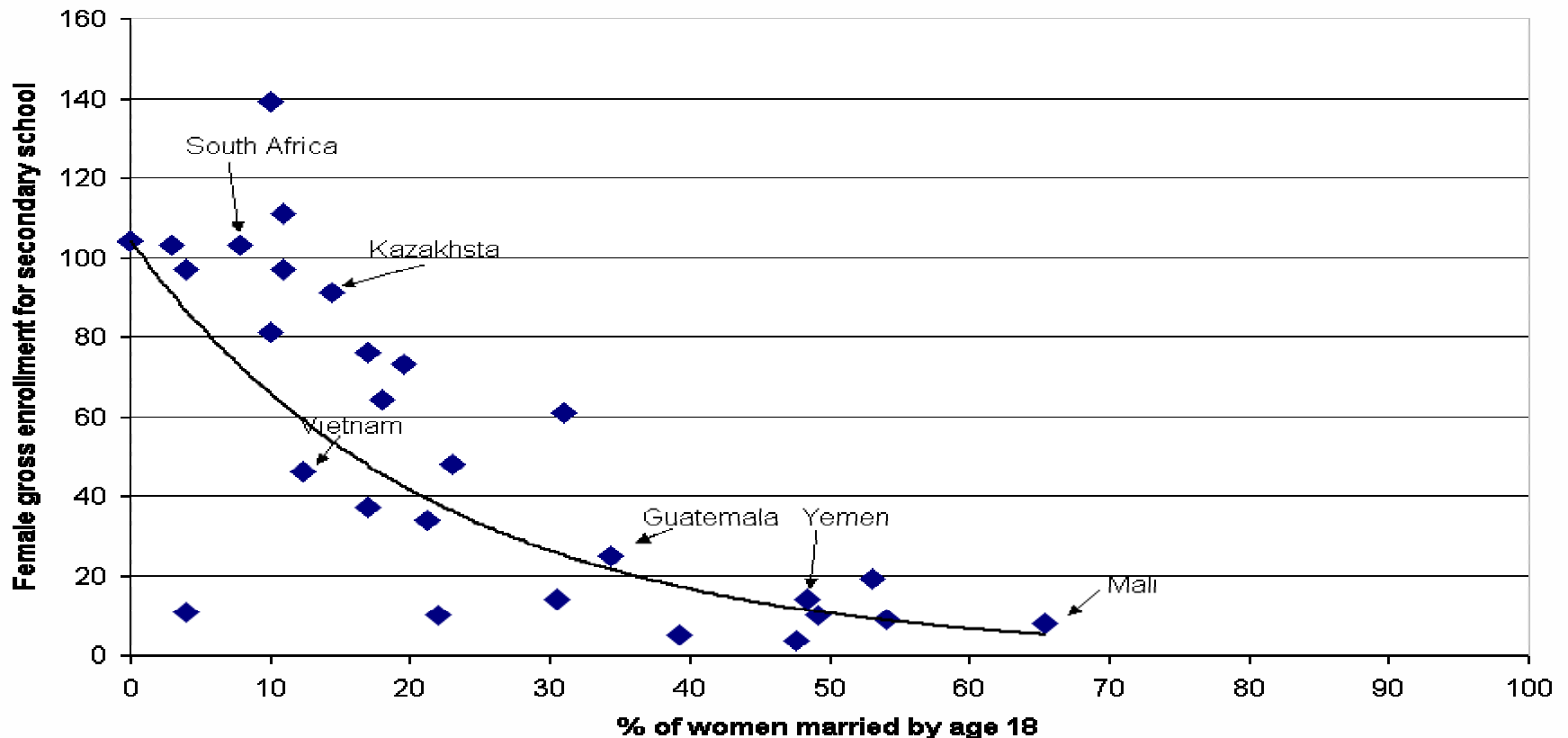
## Life Consequences for Girls and Families

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- Early, unwanted pregnancies and unwanted children
- Increased risk of maternal and infant mortality
- Increased vulnerability to HIV and other STIs
- Burden of motherhood, domestic responsibilities from young age
- Lack of education
- Lack of skills to be viable in the labor market
- Limited social support, because of social isolation

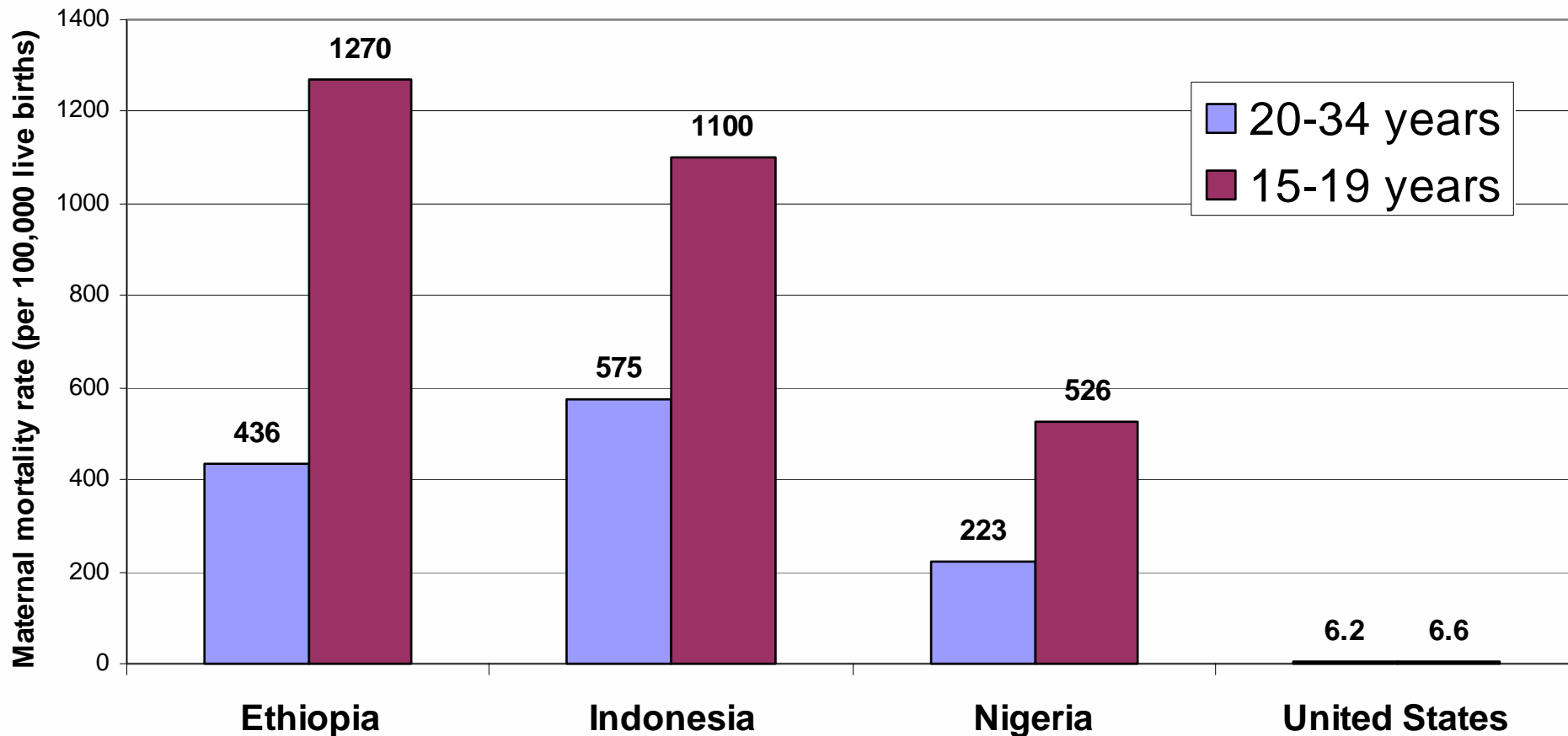
# Percent Girls Marrying Before Age 18 and Enrollment in Secondary School

Proportion of women married by age 18 and gross enrollment in secondary school





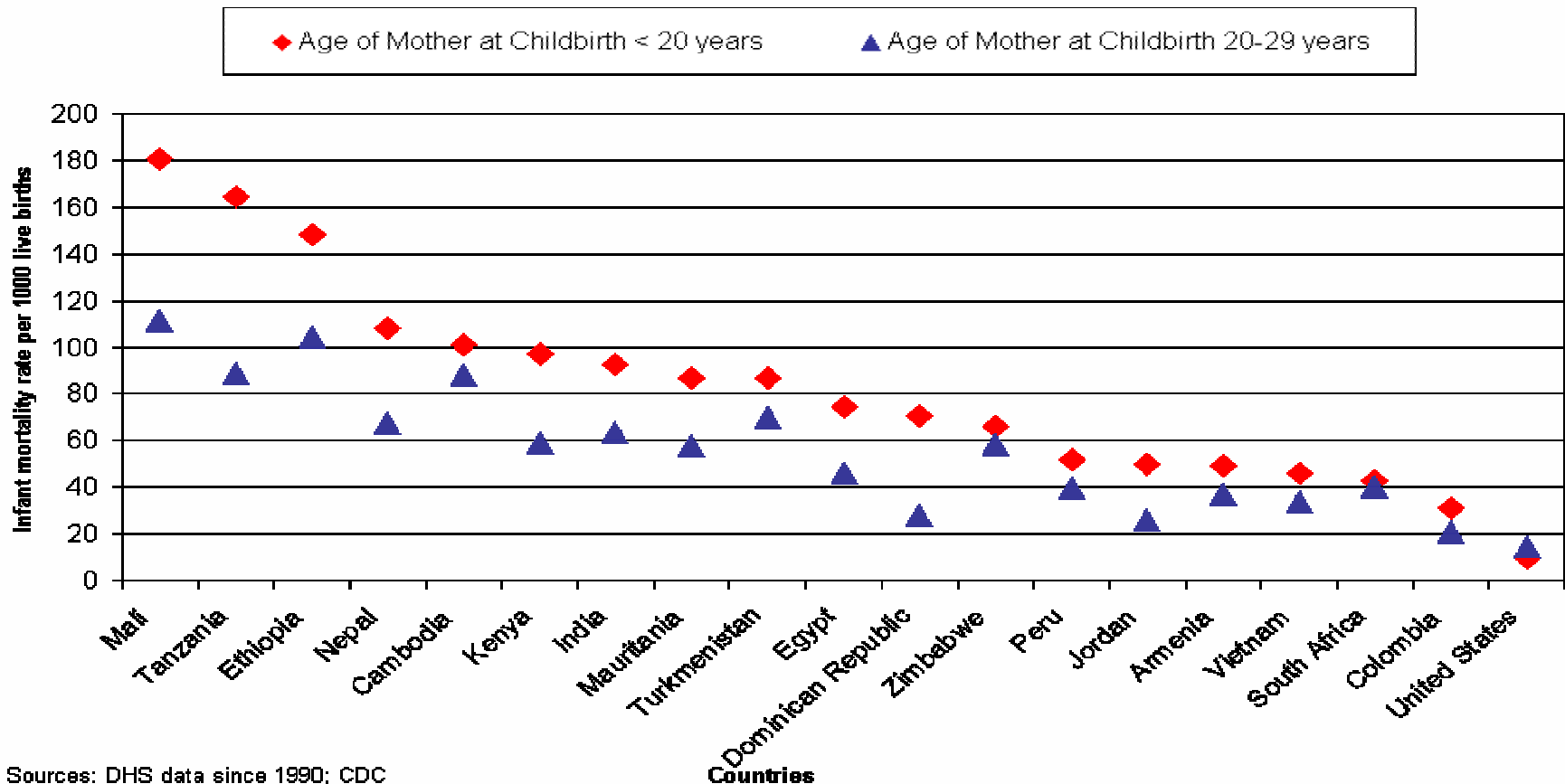
## Maternal Mortality by Age



Sources: Family care international, 1998; CDC 2002 Vital Statistics Report

# Infant Mortality Rates by Age of the Mother

Infant mortality rates by age of the mother



## **For Society, these Consequences Mean**

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- Wasted potential of each generation of young girls to become contributing citizens and empowered women.
- An intergenerational cycle of poverty, disempowerment, ill-health, and disease.

## Delay Marriage by Providing Economic Opportunities

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- In Bangladesh, young women's employment in the garment industry has played an important role in increasing the age of marriage (*Amin et al. 1998*).
- In India, state governments have developed programs that allow young women to receive the money that the state has invested in them at birth only if they complete a certain level of schooling and remain unmarried (*Government of Manipur 1997*)

## Delay Marriage by Educating Girls

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- In India and Pakistan, increased school enrollment has been associated with a decline in marriage among girls before age 14 (*Hussain and Bittles 1999; Unisa 1995*)
- The acceptance of education as desirable for girls has been a critical factor in increasing age of marriage in Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand, and Sri Lanka.

## Delay Marriage by Community Education

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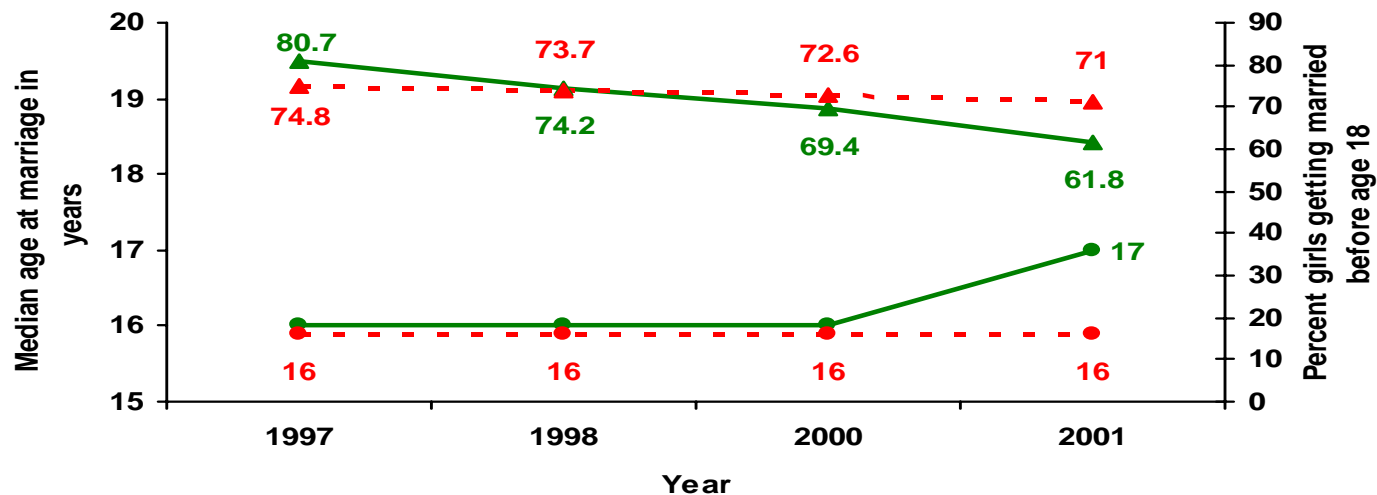
In Maharashtra, India, a community intervention which included:

- a life skills program for girls 11 to 18 years,
- meeting with parents of those who participated in the program and of those who did not, and
- the availability of primary health care for all girls in the community

resulted in some hopeful outcomes in age of marriage as compared with a control community (Khale et al. 2004).

# Results of the Community Intervention in Maharashtra: Median age at marriage and % girls getting married before 18 years

Fig.2 Median age at Marriage & % girls getting married before age 18 years



- Median age at Marriage (Study Area)
- -●- - Median age at Marriage (Control Area)
- ▲— Percent girls getting married before 18 (Study Area)
- -▲- - Percent girls getting married before 18 (Control Area)

## Promises to Keep

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- Increase the age of marriage
- Support married adolescent girls through education and livelihood opportunities
- Empower unmarried girls who are at risk