***Impact of Ethiopia's Minimum Age of Marriage Law on Adolescent Reproductive Health: A Quasi-Experimental Study***

**Abstract**

Child marriage has adverse consequences for girls’ health and well-being. In 2000, Ethiopia’s government passed a law increasing the minimum age of marriage from 15 to 18 for girls. We evaluated the impact of the law on adolescent reproductive health indicators. We aggregated nationally-representative cross-sectional data to the cohort level for Ethiopia and 14 comparison countries. We used difference-in-differences and synthetic control methods to compare cohort trends in Ethiopia to those in comparison countries. Implementation of the law was associated with a 9 percentage point reduction in risk of adolescent birth for exposed cohorts and a 14 percentage point reduction in risk of sexual initiation before age 18. There was no association of the law with changes in risk of termination of pregnancy, unmet need for contraception, infant mortality rates, or neonatal mortality rates. Implementation of the law was associated with a similar reduction in risk of adolescent birth in both urban and rural areas. However, the law appeared to have no effect for girls who had no schooling compared to a large effect for those who had at least some primary schooling. National minimum age of marriage laws may be effective catalysts for spurring social change around child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa, resulting in reduced adolescent birth rates. Changes in child marriage legislation must coincide with improvements in girls’ access to education.