

# *Untimely unions, evils for families and societies*

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**Illustrative image taken from Radio Bayamo**

By Roberto Morejón

Child marriage and early unions are a complex problem concerning gender inequalities, poverty, school dropouts, violence and early pregnancy -- latent conditions in Latin America.

One in four girls and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean married or entered into a formal union before the age of 18, according to an official report.

Without corrective measures, the region will be the second worst in the world for early marriage data by 2030, behind sub-Saharan Africa.

Such assertions correspond to a group formed by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and UN Women.

These mechanisms underline that Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region in the world where child marriages have not decreased in the last 25 years. And to top it off, it ranks second globally in the number of adolescent pregnancies.

Unfortunately, the general assent or resignation to child marriage and the insufficient visibility of this practice as a problem hinder its decline in the area.

This trend is harmful as specialists affirm that such practices affect the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the individual level, marrying at the wrong age puts girls' lives and health at risk, as well as limiting their future prospects. It should be borne in mind that this type of decision leads to dropping out of school or, at the very least, to poor results and low literacy levels.

Nor is the accompaniment of some type of sexual, physical or emotional violence ruled out.

It is true that since 2017, UN WOMEN, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund have been implementing a Regional Program in Latin America and the Caribbean to ensure today's girls, who will be adults in 2030, offers for their progress.

But it is insufficient. The State must provide greater coverage for adolescents to complete secondary, technical and even higher education.

Child marriage and early unions lead to less social, economic and political participation of those involved and hinder the pursuit of well-being in nations.

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