



Dear Readers,

Across South Asia, the climate crisis is not only measured in melting glaciers or rising seas. It is written into the cracks of parched farmland, in the absence of rainwater in a well, and in the decisions quietly made when crops fail or floodwaters rise. When land gives less and the future grows more uncertain, it is often girls' lives that are quietly rearranged.

In drought-hit interiors and riverine deltas, marriage has become a silent form of adaptation — not planned by policy, but forged out of necessity. Without formal safety nets, families turn to one of the oldest social institutions to cope. A daughter's wedding might mean one less mouth to feed, access to a safer village, or a claim to protection through kin. Often, it is early. Often, it is unequal.

Launched on World Environment Day, Climate Brides Quarterly explores this fragile terrain, asking:

- How is marriage being used to cope with climate change?
- How does it redistribute care, labour, and risk?
- Who gains, and who is left more vulnerable?

Each issue will bring together field stories, critical readings, grassroots innovations, and tools in multiple languages — a shared learning space for the anganwadi worker, the researcher, the youth advocate, and the policy thinker. Together, we are asking what real climate justice looks like — from the bastis of India, to the pukurs of Bangladesh, and the floodplains of the Tarai.

VOICES FROM THE GROUND

Last month, Pakistan took a long-overdue step: child marriage is now banned in Islamabad, with 18 set as the legal minimum age. Lawmakers hailed it as a win for girls' rights — a rare sign of progress in a world where such rights are under threat.

But while the law matters, raising the age alone won't end the practice. What's needed is deeper change — in livelihoods, social protections, and the hard choices families face in the aftermath of disaster.

This June marks three years since the catastrophic 2022 floods. In Usta Muhammad, one of the worst-hit towns in Balochistan, child marriages surged. Crops failed. Incomes vanished. And daughters became currency.

"We lost our home to the flood. Then I lost my daughter to marriage," one mother said.

"We only sell our daughter because she can bear children. We do not sell boys," said a father.

"Child marriage has always existed here," added a senior police official.

"But it got worse after the floods."

Girls were married for Rs. 300,000 to Rs. 500,000 (roughly USD 1,000–1,800) — to repay loans, pay medical bills, or educate sons. Some were married more than once. If a bride fled, a younger sister took her place. In regions like Balochistan, child marriage is not just tradition — it is adaptation under pressure. Unless laws are backed by real investment — in education, land rights, healthcare, and labour — they won't reach the girls they are meant to protect.



Tune in to the Climate Brides podcast with Maryam Jamali from Madat Balochistan, as she talks about their relief work after the floods — and what was missing when it came to supporting girls and women.



LISTEN TO THE [EPISODE HERE](#)
OR WHEREVER YOU GET YOUR
PODCASTS.

WHAT WE ARE READING

We have curated a few powerful pieces this month that reflect the growing intersection between climate stress and early marriage:

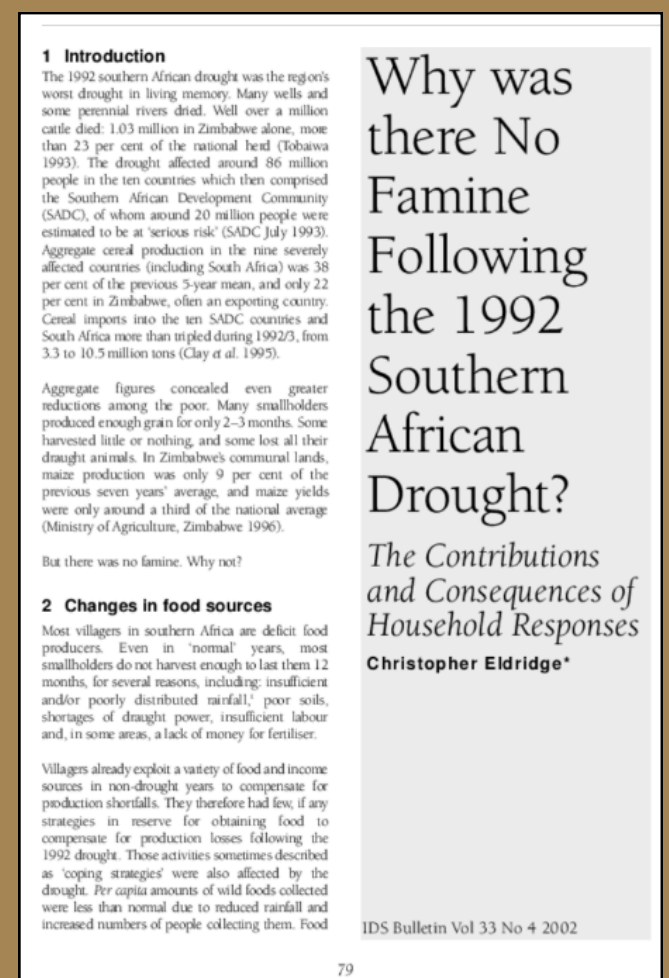
[Why was there No Famine Following the 1992 Southern African Drought? — Christopher Eldridge \(IDS Bulletin, 2002\).](#)

One of the earliest studies to link environmental shocks with marriage practices, this paper documents how drought in Southern Africa pushed some families to marry off daughters in exchange for bride price — a critical coping mechanism in the absence of aid.

[Does Climate Change Increase the Risk of Child Marriage? — McLeod, Barr & Rall \(Columbia Journal of Gender & Law, 2019\).](#) Focusing on Bangladesh and Mozambique, this socio-legal analysis explores how climate-related events intersect with poverty and gender inequality, with important gaps in data and policy still unaddressed.

[Global Girlhood Report: Girls at the Centre of the Storm — Save the Children \(2023\).](#)

By 2050, nearly 40 million girls could face the double threat of climate change and child marriage — a 33% rise. This report draws on data and testimonies from across the Global South, highlighting how environmental stress drives early marriage as a last resort.



LANGUAGE CORNER

In drought-hit Marathwada region of western India, the phrase gate-cane kele — “they did a gate-cane” — is common. These marriages aren’t about celebration, but survival. Contractors prefer husband-wife teams (koytas) for cane-cutting. So adolescent girls are married quickly, often with no rituals, just a ride to the fields.

The term borrows from “farmgate” sugar sales — fast, unregulated, and shaped by urgency. Not quite Marathi, not quite English — but unmistakably rooted in a region where climate, labour, and gender collide.



gate-cane (noun):
A quick, informal marriage arranged in western India’s sugarcane belt before harvest — enabling couples to migrate for seasonal labour.



READ THE FULL PAPER IN [CLIMATE AND DEVELOPMENT](#), OR SEE COVERAGE IN [THE TIMES OF INDIA](#).

RESOURCES FOR GRASSROOTS

This quarter, we are sharing a powerful new tool: The Climate Brides Map — a visual explainer showing how climate risks in South Asia fuel the structural conditions that drive child marriage.

Ideal for classrooms, workshops, and advocacy settings. Feel free to print and circulate from www.climatebrides.com/map

Currently available in: English, Hindi, and Nepali

CLIMATE BRIDES

(Un)tying the knots between Climate Change and Child Marriage in South Asia



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