Title: Early entrance to married life in traditional and vulnerable settings: the case of Afghanistan.

RESUMO:
O casamento, principal objeto de estudo da nupcialidade, é uma das instituições sociais mais importantes que ainda marca o início da vida reprodutiva em várias sociedades contemporâneas. É fruto de um complexo processo que pode ter implicações sobre o desenvolvimento social como parece ser o caso do Afeganistão. Este paper analisa a idade ao casar num contexto de alta vulnerabilidade social e, mesmo com dados pouco confiáveis, mapeia o cenário de casamento na população afegã e aponta os principais desafios relacionados e esse evento em idades muito jovens. Trata, pois de um tema abordado pelas agências internacionais de desenvolvimento e chama a atenção para a violação dos direitos humanos ao detectar indiretamente flagrantes estatísticos de casamentos forçados e/ou envolvendo crianças.

Usam-se pesquisas domiciliares, coletadas em treze províncias do Afeganistão, ao longo da presente década (os anos 2011 a 2017) e cobrem pouco mais de 50% da população estimada para o total do país. Os principais resultados da análise confirmam a universalidade de casamento mediante um processo muito rápido. No caso das mulheres, ele começa mais cedo e a proporção de casados aumenta de acordo com a idade de forma mais acelerada. Os indicadores de nupcialidade sugerem que mudanças importantes estão ocorrendo na sociedade afegã. Ao mesmo tempo, políticas de adiamento dos casamentos em idade muito jovens parecem frutificar, graças à expansão do sistema educacional para incluir as meninas; há indicativos de que as mesmas estratégias de inclusão social podem aumentar a propensão a casar mais cedo dado o alto valor social do casamento e da família expondo as mulheres a uma maior vulnerabilidade.

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1 This paper is a byproduct of a project that analyses the demography dynamic of Afghanistan using data collected in the Socio Demographic and Economic Survey (SDES) project. It was funded for the Japanese and British Governments and implemented and developed by the Afghan Central Statistics Office and the United Nations Population Fund for Population Activities in Afghanistan. The authors form part of the research team in charge of the analyses.
INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions in a number of current societies that includes Afghan population and is the mean subject of study of Nuptiality. The way this demographic variable performs is a socio-demographic process that can have many and most relevant development implications. It plays an important role in the demographic dynamics when a number of elements converge, as it seems to be the case in Afghanistan. Exposure to pregnancies is only within marriage and marital fertility occurs as a natural process related to the level of couples' fecundity (biological capacity to conceive). “There is no word for ‘single mother’ in the Pashto or Dari”(Hayeri, 2016)

There is no strong incidence of social norms, which are geared to protect the women and children’s health by preventing too early entry to marriage, too close and too many pregnancies. Under those conditions, the moment of entry into marriage, the probability of marriage by age, and the final proportion of ever married (EM) largely determine the fertility level and age pattern and consequently large part of the reproductive process:

Beyond its demographic implications, nuptiality also plays an important role on gender issues, on the reproductive health outcomes (for both mother and child), on the rights of the child and on human capital formation of the younger generations. Child and early marriages, as well as the spousal age difference are correlated with gender equality and the status of girls and women in society. When girls enter and remain in the education system for longer time, they not only access knowledge and skills that better prepare them for life, but they also enter marriage in more equitable basis in relation to their husbands. They would have acquired skills which may open opportunities for jobs and the possibility of generating their own income, thus reducing economic dependence. They would enter marriage physically and emotionally more mature, better prepared to bear children and provide them with adequate care, reducing infant and child morbidity and mortality. All these elements are powerful factors in the social and economic development, and in different ways, they feature in several of the targets adopted to monitor progress towards achieving the SDGs. Hence, the analysis of nuptiality occupies and important place in the study of the SDES survey data.
This is particularly true in Afghanistan, a country characterized by an early age at first birth, short birth intervals and the continuation of childbirth up to advanced ages (UNFPA-Afghanistan, 2012). Early age at marriage, in turn, is associated to an early age at first birth and thus it is an important dimension of women’s reproductive behaviour with far-reaching consequences, particularly for their reproductive health and social status (Singh and Samara, 1996).

Widowhood is also an important dimension of Nuptiality, whose magnitude – particularly among young women – is unknown. On the one side, the social unrest that Afghanistan suffers has produced impressive male casualties and left young widows, very often with very young children. On the other side, there is the negative social status given to a widow, stigmatized and considered bad luck or burden on the family of the deceased. She is a “besarparast” (“without-a-head-of-household”), regardless of whether she works or not or can support her family (Wakilzada, WUNRN, 2017). Both aspects demand data and comprehension of female widowhood if women discrimination, as implicit in the SDG framework, is to be eliminated.

**Objectives**

This report refers to the frequency and intensity of marriage, explores the distribution of the population by marital status and develops synthetic measures of marriage. Two set of provinces using the SDES data carried out between 2011-2014 and 2014-2017 respectively are analysed. Annex 1 shows the location of these set of provinces As most of the demographic variables suffer the influence of the social context, a brief profile of each province socioeconomic status will be considered in order to support the understanding of the nuptiality patterns to be study. In general terms, social indicators confirm that Balkh and Herat are the most urbanized provinces and have the lowest female illiteracy rates; Badghis and Samangan, at the other end, hold the most vulnerable positions with relatively little difference from other provinces.

In first place, behaviour patterns of entering into marriage and evidences of the beginning of exposure to a reproductive life are presented. Considering early marriage a harmful traditional practice (UNICEF, 2005) an assessment on the incidence of early marriage is included using the information available.

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2 An Annex with details of the socio-economic profile will be included in the complete version of the paper.
The age difference between husband and wife is analysed because of its demographic role and because it is an indicator of gender relationships. Finally, an approximation to the potential determinants of the nuptiality pattern is made by using education as a proxy of the socio-economic levels in the population.

The complete version of the paper analyses the association with socioeconomic variables like education and family wealth. As gender relationships are extremely unbalanced, women and male education (including household head) are modelled.

Finally, dimension of female widowhood is raised to call attention to such an extremely vulnerable population.

THE BEGINNING OF EXPOSURE TO A REPRODUCTIVE LIFE

The beginning of exposure to a reproductive life is here depicted: firstly, the proportion of married man and women at very young years; secondly using a well known measure of nuptiality, the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM).

Early Marriage

Early marriage is a marriage carried out before the girl is physically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing. It also includes what is known as child marriage that refers to any marriage before puberty period (12 years old approximately). Early marriage by international standards is defined as any marriage below the age of 18 (UNFPA, 2012) and UNICEF (2005) recommends a set of indicators for their assessment. This subject was not among the main objective of the SDES project, however data collected allow us to detail the marital status at earliest ages since questions were applied to the population of all ages and most of the UNICEF’s indicators are included here.

There are two categories to consider: the ever-married (EM), on one side, and those never married but engaged, on the other side. These two classifications approach, firstly, the population at risk of having children, which is important for the study of the reproductive process. Secondly, by using the information on formal engagement at very young ages, graduation of gender relationships is possible and it is considered here as an analytic category diverse from single population.
While engaged, girls are considered neither married nor single; hence they are classified in this particular status as out of the marriage market. As far as fertility concerns, the difference between single and engaged status is irrelevant, since neither is associated to a pregnancy exposure in the absence of sexual life that start only with marriage. However, from a gender perspective this is relevant. The engaged status in general is associated with family decisions made on behalf of girls at their earliest ages. The prevalence of this practice is a concern among decision makers. Therefore the study of this situation is relevant to policy decision making, and for this reason a question about this status has been included in the SDES.

Early marriage it is known to be a reality for many young women in Afghanistan. A number of publications mention the prevalence of child/early marriage as an issue of high concern; at the beginning of the 2000’s, roughly, half of females in Afghanistan married before their 16th birthday. UNFPA web site mentions, that “Although getting reliable data is difficult, the most recent surveys (by 2015) estimate some 46 per cent of Afghani women are married by age 18;15 per cent of them before age 15”. Similar proportions were found in the Afghan Demographic and Health Survey (AfDHS-2015).

At the same time, it is important to consider that policy strategies towards struggling early marriage are being implanted in Afghanistan, among them, incentives for the young girls to enter and remain in school as defined in the “National Action Plan To Eliminate Early and Child Marriage”, launched on April 2017.

Marriage before age 18

Table 1 shows a wide portrayal of marriage at early ages. Children and young population Engaged or Ever Married (EEM) are classified in specific age groups to analyse evolution of entrance to marriage in each panel as indicated:

- a) Before age 16, to capture information of marriage before the legal age for girls to marry; since information before age 12 seems incomplete, ages 12 to 15 are considered.
- b) Ages 16-17 to complete what is considered early-marriage, i.e. any union before age 18.
- c) Ages 18-19

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3 See for instance: Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission Economic and Social Rights Report in Afghanistan-III (2008); APHi/MoPH (2011); UNFPA (2012b)
d) Ages 20-24 the group that completes the called young population.

Table 1 also includes the sex ratio, indicating how many girls are in each age group relatively to boys. The actual number of persons (N) that have this information available in the SDES is also included to ensure that observations are enough to calculate the indicators.

Early marriage and the child marriage specific subtype does happen. The average prevalence of EEM for girls under 16, the legal age for them to marry in Afghanistan, is around 10 per cent for the provinces. This proportion, that can be as high as near 18 per cent in Badghis, and around 37 per cent in Ghor, has always relevant values in the other provinces and it is always more relevant than among boys. In any given province, number of girls EEM is surely two, threefold or more the number of boys.
Marriage and engagement at ages 16 and 17 present similar pattern. Legal coverage allowing young girls to marry before age 18 makes the proportion rise to near half of these girls to be either engaged or married already. The engagement or even formal wedding of girls very often may be a way to strengthen family status or even a
strategy to escape from poverty (WCLRF, 2008)\textsuperscript{6}. It is also known that parents in Afghanistan are likely to marry their daughters at young ages in order to secure their future\textsuperscript{7}.

Proportion of EEM at ages 18 or older is near twofold the proportion in the younger group and in most of the cases encompasses more that 50 percent of all women. There are always more girls than boys EEM. The exceptions are again Ghor and Badghis with the largest proportions: 75.9 percent and 72.3, respectively, of all women.

Finally, at the age group 20-24, one can say that entrance to marriage is a consolidate process among Afghan women. In general, far more than two thirds of women are either engaged or already married. At this particular age group, vast majority in the latter category. Ghor and Badghis, in fact, presents near 90 percent of all women. Men's profile maintains large differences in as it happens at earlier ages. Around half of them, at this age group are EEM and there are always more women than men in this category.

It is well known that marriage is strongly associated with certain patterns of the socio-cultural contexts; populations with more traditional values in general have nearly universal marriage. It is important to assess the prevalence of early marriage according to a proxy of differentials in life conditions and/ or secularism. The proxy we consider here is residence in either urban or rural areas. The urban population, in general, has better life conditions (higher education and income) than the rural, and tends to be more exposed to innovations and foreign ideas typical of secularism.\textsuperscript{8, 9}

Figure 1 shows significant difference among urban/rural proportions.\textsuperscript{10} While for the total population the proportion EEM was well below 10 percent in the age group 16–17, in rural areas the proportion is above this percentage. Despite any difficulties to collect information, SDES reveals existence of this practice, more accentuated in rural areas.

\textsuperscript{6} www.girlsnobrides.org, access at 7-10-2015
\textsuperscript{7} www.unicef.org; access at 7-10-2015
\textsuperscript{8} Attitudinal dimensions on modernization that are usually a better proxy for secularism were not collected in SDES.
\textsuperscript{9} The association between secularism and marital status is widely discussed in the literature. Beresford (2011), in a research that includes Muslim populations provides a number of related studies.
\textsuperscript{10} Considering that urban population represents about 10 percent of the total population, with the exception of Kabul, it is worth remembering that figures may be affected by random fluctuations.
Summarizing, with exception of Badghis and Ghor, as it is in a few other provinces the data reveal proportions of young married women below the very high levels frequently referred to in the literature for the previous decades. The SDES registers relative low prevalence of early marriages; it shows, however, evidence of
child marriage. Entrance at marriage was found to accelerate immediately after the girl surpasses ages at which marriage is a fundamental violation of human rights.

At the first round it is possible to observe the presence of early marriage in the rural areas of Ghor reaches disturbing levels: about 30 percent of girls below 15 are ever married or engaged, and around 40 percent are ever married before the age of 18, and 17 percent are already engaged. At ages 20–24, the proportions of EEM in urban and rural areas are similar, although the lower values correspond regularly to the former. Furthermore, in Bamiyan there is no difference in practice, and Kapisa has a higher proportion of EEM in urban areas.

On the second round, proportions of EEM at after legal age to marriage does increase three times compared to the values at earlier age group (12 to 15). Again, given the sensitivity of the issue, such an increment exposes the evidence of child marriage and particularly the female child marriage. Besides, context of living seems to play strong influence on nuptiality patterns; differentials according rural/urban residence are more accentuated than in the past. With the exception of Nimroz and Takhar – where urban proportion of EM girls is about two thirds the equivalent for rural areas – prevalence of early marriage (at ages 12 to 17) in urban areas is nearly 50% lower than in rural areas. In the most developing setting of this set of seven provinces (Balkh), EM girls represent less than 4 percent in the cities, while in the rural area, prevalence is higher than twofold (near 10 percent).

Exploring the SDES nuptiality data in relation to Coale-Trussell nuptiality patterns, there is evidence that the experience reflected in the reports of cohorts above 25 years of age differ from that of younger cohorts. Patterns for ages older than 25 reflect ages at the start of nuptiality lower than those associated with the reports of the younger cohorts. Most probably this is evidence of recent positive change toward later marriage, but could also relate to age misreporting. Further analyses are needed to better understand this issue. However, at this stage we trust the evidence that young people are marrying at later ages. Differences by urban-rural residence are unclear. Whether modern attitudes (or secularism) are influencing marital status calls for further research. Future research should include, on the one hand, whether social changes are operating in Afghan society by collecting data to measure its association with changes in marital status. On the other hand, data validation/evaluation is needed regarding the age at marriage for boys and girls, as well as on the prevalence of child and early marriages among older cohorts or generations.
Age of entrance at Marriage

Table 2 shows the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) for men and women and the corresponding differences between sexes. SMAM is also calculated for the entrance at Engagement status. It is worth to remember that the estimation of SMAM assumes stable populations, i.e., without demographic changes, which is not the case in Afghanistan. As nuptiality has been subject of social policies intending to delay the entrance at marriage, age composition of marital status is changing, hence, these results are representative for the youngest generations.

Table 2. Kabul, Bamiyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Kapisa, Parwan, Bagdish, Baghlan, Balkh, Herat, Nimroz, Samangan and Takhar (2015-2017): - Singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) for Ever married and Engaged (EEM) and Ever married (EM) by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>a) EEM</th>
<th></th>
<th>b) EM</th>
<th></th>
<th>c) SMAM difference between EEM and EM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sex Difference</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabul</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parwan</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapisa</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghor</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daykundi</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamiyan</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second SDES round (Seven provinces)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Badghis</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghlan</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balkh</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herat</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimroz</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samangan</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takhar</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SDES- 2015-2017, UNFPA-Afghanistan and CSO of Afghanistan (Micro data)

Among those engaged or ever married (EEM) the female SMAM value oscillates around 19-22. The province of Ghor is an outlier, with a female SMAM of 16.7. The province of Badghis has a quite young entrance at this stage (17.5). The male's SMAM, in general, is around three years older than female's, but Takhar with more than 4

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11 Original idea from Hajnal (1953). It is based on the concept of number of years lived by a cohort or generation in the state of celibacy; when applied to a cross-sectional data (referred to a population in a given date as in this the case) we assume no changes among cohorts relative to the way they married.
years difference. These results are coherent, since it is expected that on average men would marry older than women.

Considering the ever married population, age average of entrance at marriage oscillates around age 20 among women, being the exception Balkh and Kabul – the most urbanized provinces – where SMAM reaches age 22.1 and 22.6, respectively.

The national SMAM in 2010 was 21.5 (AMS/2010) and there are no equivalent national measure for 2015, however, the AfDHS 2015 presents the median age at first marriage for population aged 25-49 as being 18.5 and 22.9 years among women and men respectively. Considering that youngest population is excluded, the AfDHS 2015 endorse these numbers indicating a young entrance at marriage.

The SDES also provides information about those never married but engaged; this sort of marital status needs to be considered as an analytic category diverse from single population. While it demands no exposure to the risk of sexual intercourse – particularly among Afghan women– similar to the case of those never married nor engaged, it also means that engaged women have a quite high probability of ending up marrying indeed. The high probability that the girl will be marriage is based on the tradition that if a woman and her family are honourable, an engagement will not be broken. Even if her fiancé has married another woman an engaged woman is required to marry him (Smith 2009).

The relevance of the never married but engaged is based on gender equity and girl’s rights reasons. It is still frequent that engagement involving children, particularly girls precedes forced marriages (Smith, 2009) that on turn expose young women to unknown situations. Even after the end of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, some traditional customs related to marriage apparently remain, particularly in rural areas. “Parents in Afghanistan are likely to marry their daughters at young ages in order to secure their future” (www.unicef.org; access at 7-10-2015). Thus, it is common between young girls to become betrothed, while they wait to reach the aged need to get married with their future husbands. Although there are no reliable statistics, LANDINFO (2011, page. 6) quoting UNAMA (2010), reports that “Occasionally, marriage agreements are negotiated for children as young as one year old”.

12 Detail sociological implications of “engaged” status, is not the subject of this report, which is concerned with data analysis of SDES, not providing information on these arrangements. However, for the purposes of these analyses the central issue is related to the human rights of young girls. This is the essential issue for policy decisions.
While engaged, girls are considered neither married nor single; hence they are classified in this particular status as out of the marriage market. As far as fertility is concerned, the difference between single and engaged status is irrelevant, since neither is associated to a pregnancy exposure once sexual life starts with marriage. However, from a gender perspective this is relevant. The engaged status in general is associated with family decisions made on behalf of young girls. The prevalence of this practice is a concern among decision makers. Therefore the study of this situation is relevant to policy decision making, and for this reason a question about this status has been included in the SDES.

For the female population, if the engaged are not considered being single anymore, the SMAM oscillates around age than 20 and near 22 (in Kabul and Kapisa). The youngest SMAM (16.7) corresponds to Ghor, the most vulnerable setting in this set of provinces. Comparison of SMAM between EEM and EM (last columns in table 2) indicates that once an individual is engaged, it takes shorter time for the woman to marry than for the man.

It is worth to remember that the first round of SDES (Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa, Ghor, Daykundi and Bamiyan) carried out about 4/5 years before the second round, but in general, very similar timing of entrance at marriage and similar association with degree of social development. Were those provinces here analysed are a representative sample of the country, the hypotheses devised before, saying that “compared to neighbour countries Afghanistan has a nuptiality pattern with an age of entrance at marriage similar to that found in the Region, unlike what would be expected according available literature, which attribute significant earlier age at marriage to Afghanistan”. While it may be true that entrance at marriage is not happening at extreme earliest ages as this results suggest, the comparison with data from the previous round of surveys may also be indicative of no or little impact of social polices oriented to avoid marriage at those younger ages over the last, say, five years.
CONCLUSIONS

The main results of the nuptiality analysis confirm that marriage is universal in the provinces covered by the SDES. It is also a very fast process: in a relative short period of time since the onset of nuptiality, almost 100 percent of women and men have married; in the case of women it starts earlier and proportion of married increases by age more quickly.

The widespread perception that Afghan women enter into marriage at very early ages has been confirmed only in Ghor and Badghis. Whilst it is said that most girls are married before age 18, according to this data, this is not the case for the younger generation in a great part of the surveyed provinces. Although a significant number of girls are already engaged or married by age 18, they are still a third or less of all women aged 18–19, except in Ghor, where this proportion is 76 percent for girls and 43 percent for boys, and Badghis, where this proportion is 72 for girls and 35 percent for boys.

The proportion of ever married women at age 20 or older increases very quickly with age. Almost 100 percent are married by age 30, which confirms that among older cohorts marriage occurred at very early ages. Another evidence of positive change is that the prevalence of a wide age difference within couples (the husband older than the wife) is decreasing in the younger generation. Among young couples, age differences of less than six years are most common. This may herald positive changes in gender relationships.

Marriage is, effectively, universal in the provinces covered by the SDES. It is also a very fast process: in a relative short period of time since the onset of nuptiality, almost 100 percent of women and men have married; in the case of women it starts earlier and proportion of married increases by age more quickly.

At older ages, most of those outside marriage are widowed, and most of these are women. A byproduct of considering the sex composition of widowhood status is that it may reflect differences in the mortality level among provinces and by sex; hence, these results can supplement mortality research.

Our results reveal the upsurge –due to the rebound of the social unrest that kills unknown but certainly significant number of young men– of a very vulnerable population group: the female widows and the final version of the paper details them.
Nuptiality indicators suggest that important changes are operating in Afghan society. Policies for delaying early marriages seem to have produced results; the expansion of the educational system to include girls surely has also had an important role and may continue to do so. Improvement in living conditions and women’s empowerment should take off if universal education is achieved.

Modeled results on education and marriage (to be included in the final version of the paper) indicate that marriage has a positive association with welfare. This unexpected relationship is explained by the particular Afghan conjuncture. This may pose paradoxes on the possible effects of inclusive programmes, aimed to raise the standard of living. Would better life standards increase the entrance to marriage with consequent effects on fertility? As fertility is very high among married women, would this effect worsen the already precarious situation of women’s reproductive health? By no means should the consideration of these hypotheses be perceived as casting doubt on the need to urgently increase social investments in education, health and other social programmes. These investments are paramount, and decision makers should ensure that upgrades in social development translate into real life improvements for each female and male citizen. Indeed, these reflections are meant to highlight the need to adopt culturally sensitive approaches in the design of policies and programmes. In particular, culturally sensitive approaches are necessary to adequately address traditional values surrounding marriage and motherhood/parenthood, and thus to bring about positive change.

In any case, data point to the dawn of new patterns where young people are marrying at later ages. Whether modern attitudes and wider expectations of better life conditions are influencing marital status calls for further research. Future research should include, on the one side whether social changes are operating in the Afghan society by collecting data to measure its association with changes in marital status.

By considering inconsistencies in the dataset, the paper will discuss the need of more data validation/evaluation regarding the age at marriage for boys and girls, as well as on the prevalence of child and early marriages among older cohorts or generations.
REFERENCES


Annex 1 – Afghan territory and provinces where Socio-demographic and Economic survey (SDES) were conducted.

Conducted Afghan SDES

First phase 2011-2014 (six provinces)
Second phase 2015-2017 (seven provinces)