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ASIA/NEPAL - Early Marriages: Every year thousands of girls leave school to marry

Kathmandu (Agenzia Fides) - Every year in Nepal, thousands of girls drop out of school to marry. According to data of the Ministry of Education of Nepal, over 34% of new marriages in the Himalayan region are brides aged 15, although the law forbids it. The phenomenon of early marriage is very serious and out of control in Terai, the southern region of the country. In some districts, such as Rupendehi, Dhanusha and Mahottari, over 50% of brides are under 12 years of age. The parents, who adapt to this practice in order to save money, are often unaware of the impact that the lack of education can have on the future of their children. What interests them is the "dowry". If the girl is very young, the family members agree to celebrate the marriage in secret and pay less for the dowry. Many of the poorest families in Terai often have no choice but to pay a higher price for an older girl to marry their son. Prices range from 200 to $ 20,000, depending on the age of the bride, and can be especially exaggerated if she is a teacher, doctor or engineer. Despite being an illegal practice, the families in Nepal continue to agree in particular in Mahottari district, 300km east of the capital, Kathmandu, where many early marriages are still celebrated. According to government figures, over 240 thousand children do not attend school, especially those who marry at a very young age. The literacy rate in the country among children aged 6 to 15 years is 60.9%, of which 72% are boys, and only 51% are girls.
Each year, according to the international humanitarian organization Plan UK, about 10 million girls under 18 years of age get married. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 15/6/2012)

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