

CSW

(Commission on the status of women)

**“Assessing child marriages and the long term effects on the mental health of children “**

1. General information:

Child marriage, which has been on a steady decline in recent years, is a clear violation of human rights. However, it is still a major issue in many regions of the world which is shockingly shown by studies that suggest that one in five girls under the age of 18 is currently married worldwide, despite previous efforts and attempts to eliminate this practice. The long term effects on these children are wide-ranged, including physical and psychological consequences. Furthermore, multiple crises in recent years have shown the risk of reversing hard-won progress. Therefore, it is vital to assess child marriages and their long term effects now as UNESCO's SDG's call for global action to end child marriage and its implied discrimination against women by the end of this decade.

2. Background:

In general, child marriage is practiced due to poverty, social status as well as the lack of education. In many parts of the world it is difficult to cope with gradually rising financial burdens of a whole family. Since daughters who get married are often isolated from their families the moment they marry, many families take advantage of that by making the desperate choice to marry off their daughter even if she is still underage to improve the family's financial situation on the cost of their daughter's well-being.

Another reason for families to practice child marriage is the social status. As unmarried women in some countries deteriorate the social status of their family, child marriage may seem like a safety measure for families to protect their social status. Lastly, the lack of education often prevents girls to execute jobs which hinders them from getting out of poverty and enforces norms and stereotypes, perpetuating child marriage in the long run.

Overall, child marriage is practiced with both males and females. However, it is important to note that the prevalence of child marriage among boys is one sixth of the prevalence among girls, showing a clear result of gender inequality.

The consequences of child marriages are far-reaching. This practice results in an unfulfilling childhood, prevents girls from receiving high-quality education, which perpetuates child marriage in future generations, and often leads to domestic violence.

Furthermore, girls that are married often experience health-related issues, including heavy strain on their mental health due to an early isolation from their family and complications during birth because the young bodies of girls that are pregnant during adolescence may not be up to the task. The effects on girls that are married as children are, therefore, far-reaching and must be addressed in the discussion.

### 3. Issues that are likely to arise:

- Cultural differences: As western countries that are not directly affected by child marriage will possibly make an effort to eliminate it, the problem that may arise is that these countries do not understand the actual reasons why child marriage is practiced in the first place. Therefore, such countries with vastly different culture must be familiar with cultures from foreign countries that are directly affected from child marriage to find more sophisticated solutions.
- Execution of the resolution: Child marriage, as stated above, is not practiced due to a family's will, but rather it is often the only way to economically survive and a desperate choice. Thus, prohibition and control of child birth is not a practically useful solution. Instead, the root causes themselves should be tackled in order to solve this problem more effectively.

### 4. Main Countries involved:

- India: With the highest population of all countries, India has one of the strongest economies in the world. However, wealth is widely distributed among India citizens. Therefore, poverty is widespread resulting in high rates of child marriage. India must be open to accept support and make efforts themselves in order to further restrict child marriage.
- Afghanistan: Even before the political instabilities, Afghanistan had a high rate of child marriage at around 28% of all marriages as well as a high percentage of poverty. The seizure of power by the Taliban further intensifies these issues drastically by confining women's freedom. Girls, for instance, are not allowed to go to school, weakening the educational and financial standpoint of the next generation. Furthermore, inflation causes even more strain on families and their financial situation. Thus, immediate action is required in order to prevent a further increase in the practice of child marriage. Moreover, Afghanistan must solve the challenging task of balancing the government's policies in regard to women's rights and freedom and addressing the issue of child marriage.
- Bangladesh: As in this country the majority of all marriages involves at least one person under the age of 18, Bangladesh is clearly one of the main countries that are affected by this issue. Despite previous efforts and legal changes, the decline of child marriage has been slow in recent years. Therefore, more comprehensive and stronger solutions must be found in order to accelerate the decline of child marriage.
- Canada: Canada, having previously co-sponsored multiple United Nations resolutions addressing similar issues, actively supports cooperation between member states and will play a role in the discussion as a country that supports and advocates for funding new as well as already well established organizations that pursue the goal of eliminating child marriage by 2030.

### 5. List of questions delegates should ask themselves in regards to the topic:

- Is my country directly affected by the issue of child marriage?
- What are the causes of child marriage in my country? (if present)
- How can the causes of child marriage be tackled effectively?
- How can girls that suffer under consequences of child marriage be relieved?
- How can this be applied on a global scale?
- In what ways can my country assist other states effectively?

## 6. Key-terms and explanations:

- **Child marriage:** *Child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and another person.*
- **UNESCO:** *UNESCO is the acronym for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It serves the purpose of promoting international cooperation in education, science, culture as well as communication and information, contributing to peace and security worldwide. UNESCO's programs aim to help achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) by 2030.*
- **Education:** *Education is arguably one of the most influential factors when it comes to preventing child marriage because it is often practiced due to stereotypes and norms that encourage child marriage. Education can be applied here in order to resolve such stereotypes.*
- **Domestic violence:** *Domestic violence is violence committed inside the victim's domestic circle. In general, this term is used when the victim and the offender are in a close relationship.*

## 7. Useful sources:

[https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-new\\_delhi/documents/publication/wcms\\_359371.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_359371.pdf)

<https://unesco.org>

<https://plan-international.org>

<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org>

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook>

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