Committee: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

Topic B: Forced Child

Topic B: Forced Child Marriage in the Horn of Africa

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Introduction

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the main agency of the United Nations (UN) that safeguards children and adolescents' lives and defends their rights within 190 nations.

UNICEF was initially known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and was directly created by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on December 11th, 1946, to directly address the increasing emergency of food and healthcare to children and mothers as a consequence of World War II (UN, 2019). This was followed by the recommendation of the ECOSOC to create UNICEF based on Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations, which states the following:

The organization's main target is to benefit children and adolescents. The organization further underlines the importance of respecting the international concept of sovereignty, mentioning that UNICEF shall not engage in any activity in a country without the previous consultation and acceptance of the government concerned.

Some of the functions that the UN has given to UNICEF are child protection and inclusion (inclusive and safe environments); child survival (reducing child mortality and aiding vulnerable children), supporting equal education with quality, promoting social policies through initiatives; to reduce child poverty; to reach every child in emergencies; to empower girls and ensure a full and proper participation within their political systems; to innovate solutions to foster progress for children and adolescents; to deliver and assure the appropriate distribution of aid through logistical effort and providing lifesaving supplies; and to use data and evidence to generate research and make analysis regarding children's situation around the world (UNICEF, 2016).

As said before, UNICEF has international legitimacy in over 190 nations. However, it's important to highlight that inside the organization, there's an executive board composed of 36 nations that represent 5 UN Regional Groups. The members of the board are elected for three-year terms in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The United Nations Children's Fund cooperates with other organizations to improve its work as well as to minimize its setbacks; some UN Agencies with UNICEF are the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

It's important to acknowledge that the UN Children's Fund has 55 intergovernmental, nongovernmental, academic, and financially recognized partnerships, as well as 119 corporate partners and national donors from over 32 countries.

FAO cooperates with UNICEF to fulfill children's nutrition needs, prevent malnutrition, and ensure food security; both organizations are part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and work together to release the annual report "State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World" (SOFI).

Similarly, the World Health Organization (WHO) is essential for UNICEF's proper work, aiding the organism in monitoring the state of children and adolescents regarding both physical and psychological health; as an example, on December 20th, 2023, both organizations released the psychological intervention Early Adolescent Skills for Emotions (EASE), and both are part of the Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates (JME) group.

Meanwhile, the UNHCR helps the United Nations Children Fund with a specific collaboration framework that both organisms created in February 2023. This framework

allows both entities to share a common vision regarding the host conditions in which children refugees have to live and promote the inclusion of displaced children and their families in national plans, budgets, datasets, and service delivery systems.

UNICEF has also cooperated with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on several occasions, especially in girls' rights protection, as shown by their conjoint effort to address the problem of child marriage through the Covid-19 pandemic and mutual consultations betwixt both executive boards; one of the most notable works both organisms have done together is the "UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage" made in 2016 to tackle the issue of child marriage in the 12 countries with the highest rates being these nations Bangladesh; Burkina Faso; Ethiopia; Ghana; India; Mozambique; Nepal; Niger; Sierra Leone; Uganda; Yemen; and Zambia.

Both organisms have urged to increase their investment towards the implementation of measures to achieve the reduction of cases; the program addresses the underlying conditions that provoke child marriage using both the advocacy for the implementation of laws and highlighting the importance of data, research, and analysis (UNICEF, 2023). As for the results, UNFPA (n.d.) declares that, during a review, they found out that in the 2016-2019 period, the program helped 7.2 million adolescent girls to be empowered, it supported the education of 500,000 girls, reached 31 million people

with media campaigns and helped 11 countries to create national plans against child marriage.

Other agencies, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-WOMEN) have addressed problems like the deficiency of social protection for children, forced labor and female children rights' by Joint Meetings between executive boards, some of them have been named as "Regional High-Level Meeting" that have addressed how the creation of women's opportunities in labor market decrease the possibility of child marriage (UNICEF, 2024).

To have a complete context, it's essential to know that according to UNICEF (2021), child marriage is "a marriage or union before the age of 18" and claims that it is a problem due to the negative impact it has on their development and the exposure they are at on this context. In addition to the topic, the Horn of Africa is the name of a peninsula allocated in the eastern part of the continent. The region is named like that due to its horn-shaped formation. The Horn of Africa is composed of 4 internationally recognized nations: the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of Djibouti, and the State of Eritrea, and it's one of the areas with more child marriage victims.

Topic B: Forced Child Marriage in the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa has faced multiple difficulties throughout history. One of the most remarkable ones is the drought that has been present in the region since 2020; this drought is a direct consequence of climate change because the increase in temperatures has caused the soil and pasture to become drier, according to "The Guardian" (2023). The drought has left a high-rate scarcity of resources, thanks to the bad harvests that resulted from the drought and livestock losses; according to the organization "World Weather Attribution" (2023), 4.35 million people have been left in need of humanitarian assistance.

The WHO Health Emergencies Program estimates that 5.9 million people in the region have been facing high levels of food insecurity. As an example, two years after the beginning of the drought, two Somali districts were imminently driven towards famine. This situation led to a rise in food prices, as their statistic points out an increment of food prices higher than the registered ones in 2011 and 2017.

OCHA (2022) has registered 4.9 million children in a state of acute malnutrition in the area, along with the fact that 16.2 million people can't access enough usable water to fulfill their necessities, which has heightened the risk of water-borne diseases, such as cholera, hepatitis A, hepatitis E, diarrhea, and typhoid, as well as skin and eye infections.

The instability of the region has only worsened with external conflicts; the Ukrainian-Russian armed conflict is one of them because of the repercussions it has had on food availability. This is because of the importance that both nations had on the exportation of wheat to African countries, according to Bychkovska. Y. (2024), before the conflict between the two European nations, over 50% of the imports of wheat from 15 African nations depended on Ukraine and Russia; furthermore, two of the Horn of Africa's nations, Eritrea and Djibouti, depended on these importations of wheat for more than 70% of their total imports.

In addition to the previous information, other problems in the region have threatened the inhabitants' lives. Sub-Saharan Africa (which the nations of the Horn of Africa are part of) is exposed to rising inflation rates, Bolhuis M. & Kovacs. P. (2022) noticed that the median of the inflation rates in the region has increased by 9% while the most affected prices were food, energy, and petrol, an example of the fact that 250 million people have to use traditional cooking fuels due to the lack of possibility of acquiring petroleum (IEA, 2022). Additionally, currency depreciation makes imports more expensive, becoming the highest ever recorded.

Economic instability has significantly increased risks for populations, mainly by reducing income, imposing financial strain, and limiting access to essential services. This

has led to a rise in child labor, educational infrastructure disruptions, broader political and social instability, and health and welfare issues. Such instability has a profound long-term impact on education systems, often resulting in children leaving school. By December 2023, UNICEF reported that approximately 2.7 million children were displaced and consequently pushed out of school due to regional instability. This disruption is closely linked to an increased risk of child marriage; girls who do not receive an education are three times more likely to face child marriage than those who attend secondary school or higher, according to World Vision Australia (2020).

As said before, child marriage and education are highly related; not only do victims of child marriage tend to leave school, but also, out-of-school children are more prone to child marriage and gender-related abuse. Africa has the highest number of out-of-school children and adolescents in the world. According to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, tens of millions of African children and adolescents do not go to school. Furthermore, girls living in conflict zones in Africa are at significantly higher risk of being denied an education.

UNICEF (2022) reports that none of the five countries with the highest child marriage rates have a secondary completion rate higher than 15% and that, in fact, in 3 out of those five nations, only 5% of girls have had the opportunity to finish their

secondary education, UNICEF mentions that if all girls were to complete their secondary school, then the level of child marriage would fall up to ⅔, since education equips girls with the skills to become self-sufficient, reducing their reliance on marriage for economic security.

It's important to mention that child marriage has been historically present in Africa, especially in the Sub-Saharan nations before the colonization arrived in the 19th Century, specifically in urban populations. According to UN-WOMEN et al. (2018), 43 of the 54 African nations have a legal framework that protects children from child marriage; however, child marriage is legalized in 38 countries.

Since 2016, Jones et al. have identified that social and religious norms, such as beliefs about impurity or a lack of virtue, negatively impact societal frameworks. These harmful beliefs often lead to the perception that unmarried women are morally compromised or less respected within their communities. Additionally, UNICEF (2021) has highlighted a strong link between female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. In Ethiopia, 37.8% of women who have undergone FGM also experienced child marriage, which is notably higher than the 30.8% who have only undergone FGM without child marriage.

The gravity of the situation worsens as more statistics are seen. The organization "Girls Not Brides" (2023) indicates that 40% of the girls in Ethiopia are married before age 18 while 14% are married before being 15 years old representing more than 3 million girls in this situation. Primarily, it stems from economic pressures, such as a lack of resources and the desire to reduce financial burdens. Cultural norms and traditions often uphold the practice, viewing early marriage as a way to protect girls or secure their future.

The Ethiopian case records the highest rates of child marriage in the country, with approximately 45% of girls getting married before the age of 18 years. UNICEF has also identified hotspots for child marriage in the regions of Oromia, Gambella, and Somalia. However, there are other countries in Africa with the highest prevalence of child marriage, including Chad (67%), CAR (68%), South Sudan (52%), Mali (52%), Niger (76%) and Mauritania (37%) according to the GPE Results Report 2018.

Refugees also struggle within the region, especially the Somali ones who have been displaced to Ethiopia, according to a study by Elnakib. S. et al. (2021) found out that 11% of Somali refugees in Ethiopia were already married before age 18 because of the misconception that women's reproductive abilities decline sharply after a certain age, leading to social pressure to marry and have children. Therefore, it concludes that the problem also needs a comprehensive solution from the refugees.

Eritrea faces a similar issue, with 41% of the girls' population being married by age 18 (Girls Not Brides, 2022). 39.3% of women have experienced both FGM and Child marriage, while 46.5% have only experienced FGM (UNICEF, 2021). Traditional laws are essential contributors to the Eritrean issue; the Eritrean Civil Code, specifically articles 581 and 329, establishes age 18 as where girls can get married. Nevertheless, it's specified in these articles that if a girl is pregnant or has already delivered birth, it would be legal to marry her at age 16.

In some cultures, pregnancy outside of marriage is seen as a stain on the family's reputation; therefore, it can be seen as a way to ensure the child has a legal father and financial support. (AUCEMA, 2023). Furthermore, another factor that contributes to the high rates of child marriage is the certainty that some girls get married to avoid getting enrolled in the Sawa Military Training Centre & National Sevice (Girls Not Brides, 2022); most of the girls do not want to attend this service because of the poor treatment, military-style discipline, physical punishments and forced labor that individuals have to face on it, as both Al Jazeera and Human Rights Watch have pointed out in 2019.

On the other hand, Sudan has about 648,000 girls who have experienced marriage before being 18 (Girls Not Brides, 2021). 44.3% of the women population have faced FGM and Child marriage, and an alarming 53.8% have only endured FGM (UNICEF,

2021). This country specifically has an issue regarding education, ElAsad. S. et al. (2023) conclude that this is the result of internal displacement caused by an internal armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces that has even forced the population to use schools as shelters for the displaced ones and, as mentioned before, the high rate of children without scholarly translates to a high probability of being a child marriage's victim.

In Kenya, 580,000 women have faced child marriage, representing 23% of the women population (Girls Not Brides, 2022). Otieno. J. (2023) highlights that Kenya is passing through an educational crisis due to the government's payment issues, especially having frequent delays in payments, which has led to both partial and total closure of schools; this situation has also led to school riots such as the ones in Meru County and the Tharaka Nithi County.

Another alarming consequence of insufficient economic resources and essential services is the prevalence of child marriage in Uganda. Approximately 34% of Uganda's female population, equating to about 723,000 women, have reported being victims of child marriage (Girls Not Brides, 2022). Lakica R. (2023) identifies seven key issues contributing to this problem: conflicts and insecurity, a shortage of teachers, economic scarcity at the household level, physical distance from learning centers, the impacts of

COVID-19, inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, and teenage pregnancy and child marriages.

The rate of teenage pregnancy in Uganda is particularly concerning. By June 2022, the Ugandan government reported an adolescent pregnancy rate of 25%, the highest in Eastern Africa. This high rate is closely linked to child marriage, as noted by UNICEF (n.d.), which states that "child marriage often drives early pregnancy, and pregnancy may also precede marriage, acting as a trigger for child marriage or early union."

South Sudan reports a 52% rate of child marriage, with 132,000 women victims of it before being 15 (Girls Not Brides, 2021). South Sudan faces three main problems that affect the child marriage rates: the armed conflict that is present in the nation, the challenges that education has to face, and the high teenage pregnancy rates that the nation counts, according to Buchanan. E. (2019), since the beginning of the conflict, the displacement and food shortages have increased, and families were forced to seek sources of financial support through their daughters; a total of 71% of the girls in the region under 18 years are registered as married which is substantially more than the average rate of the nation.

Education has also been a concern since Abusim. H. A. (2023) draws attention to the fact that only 10% of children in South Sudan complete primary education, while 70% of South Sudanese children and adolescents have never been in a single class. Abusim highlights four different challenges for education. The non-gender perspective of the educational system, along with the lack of teachers, the lack of an adequate education development plan from the government, challenges in the transportation system, and challenges in educational facilities.

Lastly, high pregnancy rates have been involved on this issue as well; the teenage pregnancy rate in South Sudan is highly concerning, carrying higher risks during adolescence, with risk of mortality being almost twice as high when compared to women in their twenties bearing in mind that 99.2% girls aged 15-19 were either pregnant or had given birth in 2021 (World Bank Group); being higher than the average perceived in "low-income" classified nations as well as higher than the world average (42.5%).

Historical Background

The increase in child marriage rates goes back to the civil armed conflict in Sudan, better known as "The First Sudanese Civil War". Around 1953, Sudan was significantly influenced by the colonial legacies of the UK and the regional interests of Egypt, which

shaped the conflict's trajectory and the subsequent peace efforts, triggering an agreement that Sudan would become an independent state in 1956; however, in August 1955 a year before Sudan's independence an armed conflict began between the Northern and the Southern regions of Sudan.

The origin of this event was mainly due to a disagreement on the part of the Southern region since their right to govern themselves was denied and revoked. To clearly define, Sudan was considered the most extensive country in Africa, which allowed it to have two different regions; in the north, there were mainly Muslim people and Arab ethnicities, while most of the people in the south were Christians and animists. The differences in the religious practices and the cultural heritage between the two regions were notorious, which was why the Southern region didn't want to accept being influenced by the Northern region.

Later, in 1972, the Southern rebels and the government of Khartoum signed the Addis Ababa agreement, which imposed and negotiated peace between these parts and not only included power-sharing contracts and security for both parts but also included political and economic autonomy by establishing their legislative assembly and an executive body with the authority to manage regional affairs, including the participation of Southerners to raise their voice in the national government.

Nevertheless, eleven years after the agreement in 1972, thanks to the rebirth of new conflicts, the Second Civil Armed Conflicts began, affecting Sudan and other countries too. This conflict mainly began due to the Sudanese President Jaafar al-Nimieri, who introduced legal measures such as the "September Laws", the introduction of the 1973 constitution, and the nationalization and economic reforms that prohibited the South from having the possibility to govern themselves. In response, the South took action with the SPLA, and instead of fighting for its independence, they made a petition for Sudan to be transformed into a multi-racial and multiethnic state.

As previously mentioned, conflicts in Sudan have had widespread impacts across Africa. Similarly 1984, Ethiopia faced an armed conflict that led to severe food scarcity. The instability created by this conflict hindered the delivery of international aid. Consequently, Ethiopia's drought became one of the most notable crises of the time. The situation was dire, with approximately two casualties per 10,000 people each day. By 1985, estimates suggested 1 million casualties and over 2 million people displaced from their homes, lacking essential resources. Among these displaced individuals, 400,000 were children who ended up orphaned.

Afterward, in 1990, The Civil Armed Conflict in Somalia began, bringing many more problems. This conflict was initiated due to the overthrow of Barre, the Somali

dictator, which caused the United Somali Congress to be divided between the supporters of the interim president and those of the general president. Both parties would enter into a dispute over who would have complete control of the capital; for this reason, Somalia later entered the now-mentioned Armed Conflict.

This brought many problems to the country's society, like famine, drought, internal displacement, and the destruction of families as a consequence of the casualties. Again, famine began as a significant problem; the amount of starving people started to increase, and the attempts to receive help started being a failure due to the systematic looting and rake-off. Due to these problems, people began to find ways to protect their families and use migration to be safe. Also, food insecurity, poverty, and the lack of housing made many families see child marriage as a solution. Some girls were married early so their families could reduce their economic difficulties.

Furthermore, in 1998, a new conflict was born: the Eritrea-Ethiopia Armed Conflict (1998–2000). This armed conflict brought many more problems, like the destruction of the country's infrastructure because of invasion and resistance from both parties, food insecurity, and the PNB reduction that went from 8% to 1%.

Apart from armed conflicts, some other complications must be kept in mind. For example, in 2000, a vast drought began in the Horn of Africa; this drought affected four countries: Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda; within these countries, more than 17.57 million people were affected. During this time, there was competition for natural resources, economic and labor losses, and diet and nutrition were decreasing. Apparently, there were crucial actions for the recovery, like supporting regional food security, drought management, shortage labor management, and control of landmines.

Finally, by 2005, the conflict in Sudan had ended. Nowadays, some effects of these conflicts and droughts continue, for example, the violation of human rights because of child marriage and FGM, leading to displacement, overpopulation, lack of management of government, climate change, and the competition for natural resources resulting in the scarcity of food and water.

Current Relevance

Child marriage is something that concerns people not only in Africa but in the whole world. Worldwide, UNICEF (2023) reports that one in five girls is a victim of child marriage; the United Nations as an entire entity recognized the importance of erasing child marriage around the globe through the General Assembly's resolution

A/RES/70/1, mostly known as the resolution that gave birth to the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) back in 2015.

Child marriage was contemplated in SDG #5, titled "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Child marriage and FGM are both considered on target 5.3, mentioning directly "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation" (General Assembly, 2015).

The implementation of all SDGs has been hindered due to various issues; for example, in 2020, a drought began in the Horn of Africa that has led to high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition for the inhabitants of the region. As a direct consequence, migration and internal displacement have been highly present. The German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) et al. (2022) reported that, throughout 2020, 4.1 million refugees transited in the region while 8.1 million people became internally displaced; this has unfortunately led to the possibility of perceiving unprotected children traveling to other countries.

Another problem that has appeared in the region is the conflict derived from the 2011 South Sudan's separation from Sudan. Several groups didn't agree on how things stayed after the independence was made. Consequently, another conflict started in 2013.

This conflict created an increase in migration flow, as shown by "USA for UNHCR" (2023); the organization described how nearly 2.32 million South Sudanese have fled to other nations while 2.22 million people were left on an internally displaced status. One of the most well-known refugee settlements for South Sudanese is the Kalobeyei settlement, located in Kenya, which hosts about 148,000 people.

2020. Another conflict started in the Horn of Africa, specifically in the Ethiopian nation. It was called the "Tigray Armed Conflict." The military forces began their operations in the Tigray region in November 2020 to decrease the power of the local government in the area, the Tigray People's Liberation Front. According to Human Rights Watch (2023), as a result of this conflict, 2.3 million people have been left in need of assistance.

Famine has been used as armament; the Ethiopian government has given restrictions to the flow of food in the region, forcing Tigrayans to either surrender or pass away; Ethiopian forces have been observed destroying farms and using military mains to cut the region's access to farm inputs; these factors have contributed to a situation where 83% of Tigray's population are passing through food insecurity representing about 4.6 million people (Yeboah. F. K. & Burdsall. N., 2022). Since the beginning of the armed conflict, the USA for UNHCR (2022) has reported that as of March 2022, 60,000 people

have migrated from Tigray into other regions or other countries, with 3,000 people flying away daily.

Another important event that has happened relatively recently is the study by Young Lives at the University of Oxford in 2001. The Young Lives study reaches 12,000 children's lives to evaluate inequality and scarcity of economic resources conditions in Ethiopia, Peru, Vietnam, and India. The study was created to generate supporting material for policymakers to design public policies that properly address the solutions for those who don't have the economic resources to fulfill their necessities (Young Lives, 2021)

Later on, UNICEF (2016) released a study about FGM; the study addressed data from over 90 countries' representative surveys to compile statistics about FGM; the study comprehends the direct relationship between Female Genital Mutilation and Child marriage using as a tool, objective 5.3 of the SGDs. To conclude, the result of the study was that the areas that had more prevalence of FGM often justified these practices by cultural, religious, and social norms.

After these results came, the UNFPA-UNICEF "Global Programme to End Child Marriage" previously mentioned was founded to manage child marriage in the countries with the highest rates. However, not everything has progressed according to what it was

supposed to. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders have faced many difficulties in their path.

An example of this is the 2018 Noura Hussein case. Noura Hussein was a woman who had a forced marriage; she was registered as a woman who escaped from her husband for three years; however, she was tricked by her family to get back to her husband. Just six days after her arrival, her husband and other family members organized themselves to sexually abuse her; the activist Sarah ElHasan declared to AlJazeera that Noura was sexually abused by her husband while her cousins were witnesses. Some days after the event, her husband attempted to do it again when she entered a total state of desperation and stabbed him in the back, causing him a wound that took his life away. Next, Noura tried to hide in her family's house; nevertheless, her family decided to hand her over to the police.

In Omdurman, Sudan, the penal court applied Sharia Law, which prescribes death penalties for certain crimes, such as adultery, based on Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (BBC, 2018). As a result, individuals were at risk of execution under this legal framework. However, following the initial resolution, Amnesty International (2018) reported that Noura's sentence was reduced to five years in prison

and a fine of USD 8,400. This change prompted the NGO to advocate for a legal amendment inspired by the case.

Another big issue that the international community has faced is Kenya's situation. In June 2021, seasonal rains in Kenya started appearing with greater force than those that were seen before. Riverine floods affected households, resulting in internal displacement, especially in the Rift Valley and the coastal strip. Girls Not Brides (2022) reported that 55,002 people were left displaced during this rainy season, causing many of them to sell their young girls as brides in exchange for goods to survive.

Some other nations, like Ethiopia, faced similar issues with the already mentioned droughts; this alarmed UNICEF throughout 2022, which reported that in a short period, child marriage had risen to twice the average thanks to the droughts that were the strongest seen in forty years; the need of water assistance and food assistance along with the current displacement issues and internal and external conflicts were the perfect combination for child marriage to increase.

As a consequence of the international effort to eradicate child marriage, conservative groups have also arisen. As described by the Ford Foundation et al. (2015), religious and traditional leaders have been the ones who have defended the child marriage

concept because it is considered a religious duty and an essential step to adulthood. This shows that marrying a girl at a young age protects her from temptation or sin, preparing her for their traditional life as a wife and a mother.

On the other hand, the prevalence rate has reduced from 39% — to 32% over the past 25 years, although this is low progress in the subject compared with other regions or countries. As an example, UNICEF Data. (2018) underlines that India has decreased child marriage by 25% in 10 years, while Southern Asia has decreased by 33.3% in the same amount of time. Progress has been made; however, the rates continue to grow in the most underdeveloped countries.

Child marriage opposes international and human rights in several ways. Kagama Osama, UNICEF representative to Montenegro (2017), declared that child marriage is a direct violation of these rights since it directly opposes the proper development of children, affects their right to health and education, and makes them socially isolated. The international community has addressed these issues through various vital documents that have been signed and that are violated with this practice: Article 16 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and

the 1994 Programme Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development (UNFPA, 2012).

International Actions

Some regional intergovernmental organizations have taken action as well. The African Union (AU) has taken several actions to address the problem. On the first hand, on November 26th and 27th of 2015, the African Union Commission (AUC) conducted the First Girls' Summit in Lusaka, Zambia, in which several affirmations were made against child marriage, mentioning that "Child marriage generates norms that have become increasingly difficult to exterminate – norms that undermine the value of our women" (Dlamini N., 2015).

On the other hand, some European Union members, such as the Kingdom of Finland, have taken action in the region to try to help. Finland's mission in Somalia in 2022 let them help approximately 587,319 women to be integrated into the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services while also mentioning that communities were assisted to discontinue the practices of both FGM and Child Marriage.

Some non-governmental organizations, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International, have also been involved. HRW has been involved in spreading

information about the topic and sharing the experiences of victims in the region while emphasizing the need to consider the actions of leaders and other stakeholders to address the situation.

In addition, the NGO counts a list of recommendations for the AU, the Heads of State, Governments & Parliaments, National Ministries of Education, Health; and Justice & Home Affairs. Amnesty International's main objective in the matter of child marriage is to monitor the actions of the governments and other stakeholders to provide information and data that might help to lecture the issue in a better way; they also defuse the stories of people through their "Amnesty's Write for Rights" (W4R) and make specific recommendations to governments.

Some non-governmental organizations, such as Girls Not Brides, specialize in the topic. Which is a global partnership between 1400 civil society organizations from 100 different countries that collectively tackle child and forced marriages for the seek of girls; this using National and State Partnerships, Strategic Donors Meetings, Gender Leadership Programmes, and Regional Convenings that have provided aid to approximately 90% of their members (Girls Not Brides, 2023).

Moreover, there have been some governmental programs and protocols that, complemented with either unilateral or multilateral actions, have sought to counteract the problem independently of the work that the UN has done. Firstly, there is the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children made by the Southern African Development Community, which is a tool that nations can use to implement it at a national level to propitiate a correct understanding of the problem, making it more accessible to non-legal experts, providing practical and actor-specific guidance for using the SADC's Model Law, and promoting cohesion between stakeholders (SADC, 2018).

Governments took similar actions from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda. Regarding the Ethiopian case, in 2019, the president of the country launched the National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage; the plan is a series of critical strategies, interventions, targets, milestones, and packages based on evidence to make progress in hindering the problem try that contemplates both humanitarian and crises within their territory; the plan counts with five pillars for accomplishing the goals, these are: Empowering adolescents girls and their families; community engagement; enhancing accountability and services across sectors; creating, strengthening an enabling environment; and increasing data & evidence generation (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, 2019).

As for Eritrea, the country has executed its 2018-2022 National Education Sector Plan of Eritrea, with aims to improve education to reduce Child Marriage. Despite the Education Sector Plan being specifically focused on the development of SDG #4, it does contemplate the issue of child marriage thanks to their recommendation of improving the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education with particular attention to vulnerable groups, highlighting "the girl child" as one; the plan mentions that some of the actions that have to be executed are "…drafted gender policy and strategy which endorses the need to raise gender awareness among communities, recruitment of more female teachers to serve as role models, provision of material and financial incentives to school girls" (Ministry of Education of Eritrea, 2018).

As mentioned before, Sudan has implemented some strategies, too. One of them was named "Sudan Child Marriage Abandonment Strategy" proposed in 2014 to tackle the primary roots and attempt to decrease the rate of child marriage; this strategy was created because of General Assembly's resolution 71/175 regarding "Child, early and forced marriage" having as a response from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Sudan to the United Nations Office and other International Organization in Geneva to mention that they were going to work with UNICEF to create it.

From the Kenyan case, the 2018-2022 National Plan against Sexual Exploitation of Children in Kenya was created. This plan is specifically important for the country since it recognizes child marriage as a harmful practice. Furthermore, it contemplates the process of identification, prevention, protection, rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration, child participation, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation, and an implementation matrix to have a correct way of managing the issue.

UN Actions

Child and forced marriage are now considered one of the most problematic issues regarding the violation of human rights globally affecting women and girls. This problem not only impacts the integrity of the people but also deprives them of having an entire and risk-free life. Due to this increasing problem, The United Nations (UN) announced an implementation of a new initiative to ensure women's and girl's rights by ending child and forced marriage. The UN has been increasing and ensuring girl's right to have a proper education and access to healthcare services, helping families with economic support, educating communities on the dangers and risks children can go through

regarding child marriage, and implementing laws that will establish that the minimum age of marriage is 18.

In 1989, world leaders came together and adopted an international legal framework, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an agreement and commitment to ensure and fulfill the children's rights. This Convention states that children must be protected and allowed to grow, learn, play, and experience being human beings with their rights, separating childhood from adulthood. Fortunately, thanks to this Convention, governments have implemented laws and policies to ensure the children's right to have access to healthcare services, have proper nutrition, and protect them from violence and exploitation.

As mentioned, "Girls not Brides" is an initiative followed by organizations from over 70 countries across Africa, Europe, Asia, and America. This initiative was launched in 2011 and has seven principal objectives: implementing target 5.3 of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, developing a response to the ending of child and forced marriage, ensuring civil society organizations, addressing the possible causes of this issue, increasing financing initiatives that address this issue, identifying hotspots, ensuring that they are reached, and strengthening national frameworks.

Topic B: Forced Child Marriage in the Horn of Africa

From the part of UNICEF supports and helps the government of Kenya to stop violence, protect women from early marriage, and help them to have a proper life and ensure all their needs. For this reason, this organization is extending its life-saving protection services and conducting a deep analysis of this issue to learn more about the background and the roots of the practice of these problems.

Points to Discuss

1. Context

    a. Ensuring the effectiveness of institutions

    i. Make sure that the national laws are consistent with international treatments

    . b. Reaffirm the politics related to Children's Rights

    c. Reaffirming the Legal Framework for each country

i. After 18 years

ii. Providing laws about child marriage and its impact on society

d. Looking after the well-being of already married children

i. Ensuring support resources are provided

I.   To avoid sexual or gender-based violence

II.   Avoiding FGM

e. Reaffirming politics related to FGM

i. Addressing FGM as a harmful practice that can increase the risk of child marriage

2. Development

a. Addressing the causes for Child Marriage

i. Facing the causes

1. Reaffirming the education system in each country

2. Strategies to fight against poverty and opportunity inequalities

3. Facing droughts, by preventing a crisis when another one comes

b. Fighting against traditional ideas

i. Programs that disincentive forced marriage

ii. Campaigns to stop the stigmatizing of single girls

    1. Integrate comprehensive gender equality education

iii. Reaffirming the respect of human rights

    1. Informative campaigns for the victims and their families

    I. Educating victims and their families about their legal rights

    II. Providing information about how to access shelter

    III. Supporting the creation of laws that criminalize forced marriage

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