

Research Reports

MSMUNQ VI: The SDGs





Forum: SDG 5

Issue: Measures to combat child marriage in North Africa

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PART 1 of the Research Report: Root Causes of the Issue

What are the root causes of the issue? Use images and videos to give Evidence and Examples to your point

1. What social factors cause this issue? How does it do so?

According to Human Rights Watch, “global data shows that girls from the poorest 20 percent of families are twice as likely to marry before the age of 18 as girls from the richest 20 percent of families”. Many social factors have been contributing to the issue of child marriage in North Africa. Family honor is the most influential, believing that marrying their children can be honorable to other families and to themselves. Poverty is the most common reason cited by girls, Most commonly, these “marriages” represent business transactions wherein very young girls are sold to much older men, often strangers, for a substantial forgiveness of a family debt and financial dispute. Moreover, social and cultural norms in North Africa affect these minorities where most social and cultural norms of these communities are harsh and unequal on people.



2. What economic factors cause this issue? How does it do so?

Economic distress due to many social and cultural factors in this region, has been a main pillar of child marriage in North Africa. The economic development of many countries across the African region have been declining in economic development leading to children in this region being targeted towards economic exploitation at the hands of the people they're marrying.

3. What political factors cause this issue?

Patriarchal systems and ignorance of human rights has been really common in the North African region. Moreover, the inadequate implementation of the law plays a large part too, as the ignorance of citizens in developed North African countries leads to civil wars and humanitarian crises, which is significantly rooted within patriarchal systems instilled in the countries.

4. What other factors cause this issue? Health? Such as a pandemic? Physical? Such as Natural Disasters? Show how each of these root caused has contributed to this problem

Of the many factors which cause this issue, pandemic-related issues as of late have been playing a significant role in contributing to the issue at hand. According to the UNICEF, pandemic-related travel restrictions and physical distancing makes it difficult for young girls to access health care, social services, and community support that can protect them from child marriage, unwanted child marriage and pregnancy and gender-based violence.



In addition, the incidence of child marriage increases after humanitarian crises like wars and natural disasters, as families faced with poverty and violence use the practice as a coping mechanism.

5. How long has this issue been a problem?

In ancient and medieval societies, it was common for girls to be betrothed before the age of 15. In Imperial China, child marriage was the norm. Early marriage and teenage motherhood for girls existed in Ancient Greece. Boys were also expected to marry in their teens. Northwest Europe was characterized by relatively late marriages for both men and women. African countries have enacted marriageable age laws to limit marriage. In Ethiopia, Chad and Niger, the legal marriage age is 15, but local customs and religious courts have the power to allow marriages below 12 years of age. In Northern African countries, it was customary for the married couple to be betrothed in childhood through the family, and married on the cusp of puberty, at the ages of 10-15. In North Africa, the percentage of women married before age 18 has dropped by about half, from 34% to 13%, over the past three decades. Nevertheless child marriages are still prevalent in the region.

6. Why is this issue a problem? Why does it need to be solved at all?

Child marriage is fuelled by gender inequality, poverty, social norms, insecurity and a handful of consequences that can affect young children from their deserved childhoods. Child marriage needs to be solved due to its dangerous risks of underdevelopment of children's education, wellbeing, health and employment opportunities as well as other consequences such as sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases that are lethal such as (HIV and AIDS). Girls under the age of 15 are at high risk of a lifetime of



medical complications from giving birth out of bodies too small to do so, raising the risk of death during childbirth, and a lifetime of disability. There is also a much greater risk of ending schooling after marriage, which keeps children in a cycle of poverty.

Uneducated parents are less likely to send their children to school, seek medical advice in cases of illness, thus keeping children in a cycle of poverty as they work to raise their own children.

9. Which countries influence this issue the most? How so?

There are many countries actively involved in ending child marriage, such as the Netherlands, through programs such as girls not brides, and the United Nations Population Fund ([UNFPA](#)) Global Program to end child marriage is funded by the Governments of Belgium, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom, the European Union and Zonta International.

10. Which countries/groups are the most impacted by this issue?

Whilst the highest prevalence of child marriage is found in Niger, Central African Republic, Chad, Bangladesh, Mali, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Guinea, north african countries are also largely affected. Most countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have laws on the minimum age for marriage, ranging from age 13 in Iran to age 20 in Tunisia for females, and from age 15 in Yemen to age 21 in Algeria for males, however some families still marry their children early, following cultural practices that have been in place for centuries, during a bygone era . Due to high percentages of children getting married due to factors of poverty, less developed



education, political problems, wars, and so much more impacted communities to receive a high percentage of children to get married.

11. Which countries/groups should take the lead in solving this issue?

Whilst international support is needed, internal action taken with the voices of those most affected is essential in achieving change. Particularly in rural areas, policy and laws have little effect and are not enforced, therefore is it vital that representatives from each area of each affected nation come together to create policies that work for their communities. Countries like Sudan, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Niger show high statistics of children getting married, so for them to take the lead of negotiation and forming solutions can be beneficial with the support of the international community.

PART 2 of the Research Report: UN Treaties/Policies/Resolutions

This section covers what UN action has been taken to address this issue on the agenda

1. Which resolutions are linked to this issue [ratified](#)?

1-Resolution [A/RES/73/153](#) has been ratified by the general assembly on the topic of Child, early and forced marriage.

2- Reslution A/C.3/71/L.13 has been ratified on the topic of Sex differences in child survival and development by the general assembly.

2. How far did this resolution solve the issue?



Both resolution has been carried by the UNICEF to make programs and campaigns in rural areas where child marriage rates are high.

23. Why wasn't this resolution completely effective? Was it blocked by a specific organization/country? Were there any objections from a major organization

Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zambia were against the resolution, due to their disagreement of laws that can validate their sovereignty.

PART 3 of the Research Report: Possible Solutions

Solution 1:

North African countries must revert laws that target young children into getting married by voting procedures that can be held by governments to facilitate and approve.

Pros:

- Prevents children from getting married



- The solution will protect children from violence, with the authority of law and citizens voting, this can lead to an increasing amount of children being saved and protected.

Cons:

- The change of laws in some North African countries would increase the tension of beneficial laws that might be removed due to its target on children.
- Many people who rely on laws that protect them can lose this privilege which can cause outrage in some communities.

Solution 2:

The creation of programmes that will need to be made to increase social inclusion of children and their deserved rights.

Pros:

- This solution will spread awareness.
- It will help children to be accessed towards many opportunities such as education, and primary healthcare.

Cons:

- Communities might find it offensive and racist towards their culture, due to social and cultural norms that have been set in North African countries, it can be insulting and dangerous towards their lifestyle and opinions towards marriage.
- Less developed countries in North Africa, possibly can't afford an enough budget to create these programmes.



PART 4 of the Research Report: Bibliography

1-Bearat, Hayat, et al. *EARLY MARRIAGES in MIDDLE EAST and NORTH AFRICA Initiative on Violence against Women, Carr Center for Human Rights Policy Harvard Kennedy School of Government.*

2-Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa Executive Summary UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office.

3-Moha Ennaji. “Child Marriage in North Africa: Still a Lot to Be Done.” *The Conversation*, 23 Oct. 2019, theconversation.com/child-marriage-in-north-africa-still-a-lot-to-be-done-125400#:~:text=In%20West%20Africa%2C%20Niger%20has,17%25%20and%20Morocco%2013%25.. Accessed 9 Feb. 2022.

PART 5 of the Research Report (Video): Guiding Questions

- Guiding questions is where you pose questions to delegates to help them approach the issue
- Make sure your questions are not complicated and are easily comprehensible
- Have up to 3-5 guiding questions- make sure they are relevant.
- These questions should ensure that delegates consider all the aspects of the given issue

