

# UN Commission on the Status of Women

## CSW

CSW 64  
Commission on  
the Status of Women



# MUNUC 35

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

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## CHAIR LETTER

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Delegates,

Welcome to CSW and MUNUC 35! This year, CSW will be focusing on two issues that primarily affect the health and safety of young women all around the world. I am excited to see how the nature of our committee, with its focus on equality and empowerment will shape the discussions and solutions presented over the course of our conference together.

A bit about me: My name is Emma, I'm a third-year in the College studying Sociology and History, and this is my third year at MUNUC! Last year, I was a co-chair for UNESCO and formerly was a moderator for WTO. I am so excited to be chairing CSW this year and experiencing MUNUC in person! In addition to MUNUC, I also compete with our MUN team, and serve as an Under-Secretary General for ChoMUN, UChicago's collegiate MUN conference. Outside of the MUNiverse, I work as a barista at ex-Libris (the best student-run cafe on our campus!) and copy-edit for *The Maroon*.

Although we will be focusing on child marriage and family planning, I hope that you will use these topics as stepping stones to engage with broader issues of public health, education, and egalitarianism on an international level. I recognize that these issues may be new for many of you, and I hope that this background guide will provide you with both a strong foundation for committee and in your daily life as well. I'd also encourage you to explore outside of committee and continue your own research if you'd like to learn more! I am unbelievably excited to meet you and see what you bring to UNESCO at MUNUC 34!

Warmly,

Emma Kugelmass

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## HISTORY OF COMMITTEE

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CSW, the Commission on the Status of Women, was established on June 21, 1946 and expanded its interests and oversight in 1996 in accordance with a resolution passed by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> The Commission's first meeting was held in Lake Success in February of 1947.<sup>2</sup> Notably, all 15 of the committee's representatives were women. CSW has continued to maintain a majority of female-representing representatives up to the present day. One of the first tasks of CSW was to contribute to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, successfully adding language that was gender-inclusive.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission on the Status of Women is widely recognized as the United Nations' organ primarily responsible and interested in advocating for gender equality in all facets of life.<sup>4</sup> Initially, CSW argued for women's rights as something worthy of international recognition and attention. Following, CSW has focused on a wide variety of global concerns faced by women in all parts of the world: gender-based discrimination, reproductive health risks, and disparity in education.<sup>5</sup> In 1981, as part of the UN Decade for Women, CSW introduced CEDAW, or the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. CEDAW is the only international human rights treaty to refer to family planning in any capacity.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the United States, among other countries, has failed to ratify CEDAW given its stipulations regarding reproductive rights and access.

Currently, 45 members serve on CSW, each for a period of four years.<sup>7</sup> The Commission has primarily produced a variety of conventions and declarations containing actionable solutions that pursue its interests. Additionally, CSW has been responsible for introducing women-centric UN agencies such

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<sup>1</sup> "Commission on the Status of Women." UN Women – Headquarters. Accessed August 25, 2022.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>.

<sup>2</sup> "A Brief History of the Commission on the Status of Women." UN Women – Headquarters. Accessed August 25, 2022.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/brief-history>.

<sup>3</sup> "Commission on the Status of Women." UN Women – Headquarters. Accessed August 25, 2022.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "A Brief History of the Commission on the Status of Women." UN Women – Headquarters. Accessed August 25, 2022.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/brief-history>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "CSW65 2021." UN Women – Headquarters. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw65-2021>.

as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).<sup>8</sup> Through the collaborative efforts of all member states, CSW is working towards a more equal and empowered future.

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<sup>8</sup> "A Brief History of the Commission on the Status of Women." UN Women – Headquarters. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/brief-history>.

## TOPIC A: CHILD MARRIAGE

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### Statement of the Problem

One of the fundamental guiding principles of the Commission on the Status of Women is autonomy. **Autonomy** for women and girls to have control over their bodies, over their families, and over their futures. Child marriage leads to the forfeit of autonomy and maintenance of dependency for young women all around the globe. While the rights, obligations, and expectations of marriage may vary between cultures, the lack of choice afforded to girls who enter into child marriage remains the same. Child marriage reduces the status of young women to that of property or bartering goods and places them in a position where this status is largely inescapable for the rest of their lives. While this kind of second-class citizenry seems like an impossibility when compared to international operating philosophies of gender equality and **egalitarianism**, child marriage still operates as an economic and social force around the globe.

**Child marriage** is any kind of marital union involving an individual under the age of 18.<sup>9</sup> Oftentimes, these marriages are obtained to maintain a degree of financial security, occur in impoverished countries and parts of the world, and affirm social ties between families.<sup>10</sup> This can include marriage between two children (both parties are under 18 years of age) or that one party is an adult. Child marriage includes both formal and informal martial arrangements, disproportionately affects women, and is considered to be a human rights violation by the United Nations.<sup>11</sup> The official age for what is considered to be child marriage varies from country to country. India, for example, considers any marriage involving either a man under 21 and a woman under 18 to be child marriage.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>"Child Marriage." UNICEF, June 28, 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>.

<sup>10</sup>Nour, Nawal M. "Child Marriage: A Silent Health and Human Rights Issue." Reviews in obstetrics & gynecology. MedReviews, LLC, 2009.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid

<sup>12</sup> The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006 Archived 27 January 2018 at the Wayback Machine The Gazette of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India (January 11, 2007)

Here are some incredibly sobering statistics about the current state of child marriage, provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)<sup>13</sup>:

1. One in every five girls is married, or arranged to be married before the age of 18
2. Each year, at least 12 million girls are married before they are 18. This is approximately 28 girls every minute and where child marriage is most prevalent, 40% of girls are married before they are 18
3. More than 650 million women who are alive today, were married as children

Child marriage is most commonly found in conflict-prone and affected countries and in places around the world that have frequently experienced humanitarian crises.<sup>14</sup> Although 25 million child marriages have been prevented through a combination of international, regional, and national campaigns against the practice, rates of child marriage persistently remain high. The most effective campaigns have increased rates of girls’ education, invested resources and development in adolescent girls, as well as increased public awareness of the dangers of child marriage.<sup>15</sup> Child marriage rates are decreasing slightly, but this change is occurring slowly and child marriage is still found in every part of the world.

Child marriage is currently legal in 44 states in the US, with the minimum age of 18 only enforced in the remaining 6 states.<sup>16</sup> The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child set 18 as a minimum age in which marriage would not be considered child marriage.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the severity with which child marriage is prosecuted similarly varies. In some countries, loopholes in the legal system enable child

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<sup>13</sup>“Child and Forced Marriage, Including in Humanitarian Settings.” OHCHR. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/child-and-forced-marriage-including-humanitarian-settings#:~:text=One%20in%20every%20ofive%20girls,union%2C%20before%20reaching%20age%2018.>

<sup>14</sup>Ibid

<sup>15</sup>Ibid

<sup>16</sup>“Child Marriage in the United States.” Equality Now, April 6, 2022. [https://www.equalitynow.org/learn\\_more\\_child\\_marriage\\_us/#:~:text=Child%20marriage%20is%20currently%20legal,a%20parental%20or%20judicial%20waiver.](https://www.equalitynow.org/learn_more_child_marriage_us/#:~:text=Child%20marriage%20is%20currently%20legal,a%20parental%20or%20judicial%20waiver.)

<sup>17</sup>“Convention on the Rights of the Child.” OHCHR. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child.>

marriage to occur largely untouched. Other countries entertain a variety of penalties that depends on which jurisdiction child marriage is considered under (civil law, criminal law, **religious law**, etc.).<sup>18</sup> The kinds of action taken to prosecute adults involved in child marriage are largely informed by the prevalence, perceived necessity, and entrenchment of the practice in a country's socioeconomic system.

Beyond immediate concerns of autonomy, child marriage concerns the health of women, children, sexual and reproductive safety, and equity and opportunity for girls in their academic and professional pursuits. In addition to the wide array of maternal health concerns, child marriage poses tremendous health risks for pre-pubescent girls who are expected to be sexually active and/or bear children prior to reaching physical maturity.<sup>19</sup> Young mothers experience higher rates of birth defects, premature birth, pregnancy and delivery complications, and fetal and/or infant death.<sup>20</sup> Young women in child marriages are at a greater risk of developing sexually-transmitted infections including cervical cancers, contracting diseases like malaria, and experiencing high rates of maternal mortality.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond physical effects of child marriage and child pregnancy, child marriage has been shown to have detrimental mental health effects as well. Although mental health in child marriage is not commonly researched, a study published in 2020 in the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics compared responses from more than 18 thousand women who had been involved in some form of child marriage. The study found that child marriage is associated with longterm instances of psychiatric disorders including depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, child brides are more likely than their unmarried counterparts of the same age to become addicted and dependent on substances such as nicotine, alcohol, or other drugs such as prescription

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<sup>18</sup>"The Law and Child Marriage." Girls Not Brides. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/law-and-child-marriage/>.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid

<sup>20</sup>Ibid

<sup>21</sup>Nour, Nawal M. "Child Marriage: A Silent Health and Human Rights Issue." Reviews in obstetrics & gynecology. MedReviews, LLC, 2009. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2672998/#:~:text=A%20human%20rights%20violation%2%20child,obstetric%20ofistulas%2C%20and%20maternal%20mortality.>

<sup>22</sup>Martincic, Savannah. "Study Reveals the Traumatic Psychological Impacts of Child Marriage." SACM. SACM, September 23, 2020. <https://www.studentsagainstchildmarriage.org/post/study-reveals-the-traumatic-psychological-impacts-of-child-marriage.>

medications.<sup>23</sup> Child brides are unlikely to receive adequate mental health treatment, if they receive any treatment at all. According to the lead author of the study, child marriage should be considered a major form of psychological trauma.<sup>24</sup>

Child marriages often require young women to end their academic pursuits, limiting the extent of education obtained to that achieved within a short period of time. If girls are permitted to continue attending school, becoming pregnant and childcare eventually inhibit their ability to continue learning.<sup>25</sup> Limited education in turn limits the kinds of upward socioeconomic mobility young women are capable of achieving. The mere act of receiving an education has allowed women and girls to enter previously prohibited public spaces.<sup>26</sup> Upon receiving an education, girls are capable of accessing greater resources (economic, emotional, social) that can propel them further. When girls' educations are limited or altogether prohibited, their ability to survive independently or advocate for themselves in and out of the home is limited as well.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, this creates a self-fulfilling cycle of poverty as girls are unable to improve their independent economic or social standing, remain entirely reliant on male family members or their spouse, and have no way of establishing their independence economically, socially or otherwise.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid

<sup>24</sup>Ibid

<sup>25</sup>"Educating Girls, Ending Child Marriage." World Bank. Accessed August 24, 2022.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2017/08/22/educating-girls-ending-child-marriage>.

<sup>26</sup>"Matter of Mobility: Barriers to Women's Work and Education, and the Dangers at Home." IGC, March 29, 2021.

<https://www.theigc.org/blog/matter-of-mobility-barriers-to-womens-work-and-education-and-the-dangers-at-home/>.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid

<sup>28</sup>Ibid

## CHILD MARRIAGE REDUCES OPPORTUNITIES



Child marriage is likely the cause of 3 in 4 girls having children before the age of 18



Child marriage greatly reduces the likelihood of girls completing secondary school



Child marriage reduces the future earnings of child brides by 9%



Child brides may have less decision-making ability in the household and face higher risks of violence

How Child Marriage Limits Potential, Infographic by the World Bank<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Ibid

## History of the Problem

Child marriage, while practiced widely around the world and commonly throughout history, was previously considered a normal course of life for young women and men. Prior to the 19th Century (the industrial revolution is often cited as a turning point), girls were often married shortly after completing **puberty**. Men were usually older at their time of marriage, given the expectation that a husband would be able to provide for his household which required time to acquire wealth and stable employment.<sup>30</sup> However, girls were sometimes betrothed even prior to beginning puberty.



Depictions of Children being married in the Middle Ages<sup>31</sup>

These marriage arrangements were primarily common in ancient and medieval societies. In the Middle Ages, girls were usually married prior to turning 15. The frequency with which child marriage has been depicted in 16th Century literature and art is cited as evidence for the regularity with which child marriage was practiced. The addition of “child” to describe marital arrangements during these eras is a modern-day phenomenon. At the time, young girls entering marriage at such an early age

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<sup>30</sup>Crone, Patricia. Essay. In *Pre-Industrial Societies: Anatomy of the Pre -Modern World*, 2747. London, England: Oneworld Publications, 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Nag, Oishimaya Sen. “Child Marriage - Rationale, Historical Views, and Consequences.” WorldAtlas. WorldAtlas, April 25, 2017. <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/child-marriage-rationale-historical-views-and-consequences.html>.

was commonplace.<sup>32</sup> In Ancient Greek society, teen brides and mothers were common. However, young men were similarly expected to marry early as well.<sup>33</sup> Ancient Roman practices mirrored those of the Greeks: girls were able to marry when they were as young as 12, and boys as early as age 14.<sup>34</sup> Child marriage was also the expected cultural norm in Imperial China between the Song and Qing dynasties (12th-20th centuries).<sup>35</sup>



Betrothal of Two Children of English Nobility in 1478<sup>36</sup>

One of the most common defenses of child marriage is its long history in religious law. While each religion has its own implicit and explicit laws regarding child marriage, many of the debates

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<sup>32</sup>Ruth Lamdan: *A Separate People: Jewish Women in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt in the sixteenth Century*, p. 47. Leiden, 200

<sup>33</sup>Nancy Demand (1994), *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece*, Johns Hopkins University Press, pages 101–104

<sup>34</sup>Dahl, GB (2010). "Early Teen Marriage and Future Poverty". *Demography*. **47** (3): 689–718. doi:10.1353/dem.o.0120. PMC 3000061. PMID 20879684.

<sup>35</sup>Zhao, Z. (1997). "Demographic systems in historic China: some new findings from recent research". *Journal of the Australian Population Association*. **14** (2): 201–232. doi:10.1007/BF03029340. PMID 12322104. S2CID 8006287.

<sup>36</sup>Watson, Bruce; White, William (2016). Contributions by Barney Sloane, Dorothy M Thorn and Geoffrey Wheeler. "ANNE MOWBRAY, DUCHESS OF YORK: A 15th-CENTURY CHILD BURIAL FROM THE ABBEY OF ST CLARE, IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS" (PDF). *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*. **2**. London and Middlesex Archaeological Society. **67**: 229. ISBN 978-0-903290-72-2.

surrounding child marriage today rely on incorrect understandings of religious law. Child marriage is a cultural practice stemming from religious social values. It is not necessitated by any religious doctrine or law.<sup>37</sup> For the purposes of this committee, **child marriage will not be considered a religious practice**, as this is a harmful mischaracterization of child marriage that ignores the entrenchment of the practice as a social norm. Furthermore, child marriage is practiced with varying degrees even in places that live under religious law. To this point, countries that practice religious law are not uniquely responsible for child marriage in the modern day.<sup>38</sup>

Despite this, religious doctrines of marriage and religious determinations of **gender roles** factor heavily into the perpetuation of child marriage. Furthermore, religious leaders play a crucial role in the practice of child marriage given their position as sanctifiers of marriage. The role of religious leaders and the relationship between **social norms** and religious precedence are critical structural elements that maintain the practice of child marriage.<sup>39</sup>

Each religion has its own way of defining marriage, determining appropriate marital age, and punishing those who choose to marry outside of these parameters. Canonical Christian law forbade marriage before the onset of puberty for girls.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Jewish law strongly discourages marriages before puberty as well.<sup>41</sup> According to Judaism, while girls can be married off as early as 12 years old<sup>42</sup>, it is not “proper” for fathers to make this decision.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, in early Dharmasastra, a Hindu scripture, girls are expected to marry only after they have reached puberty.<sup>44</sup> In Islamic Sharia law, a minimum age for marriage is not defined. Rather, readiness for marriage is determined by a young woman’s physical maturity, similar to other religions. In 1917, with the **codification** of Islamic law by

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<sup>37</sup>“Child Marriage and Religion.” Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/child-marriage-and-religion-o>.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid

<sup>39</sup>Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs. “Religious Challenges and Child Marriage.” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/religious-challenges-and-child-marriage>.

<sup>40</sup>Burn, Richard; Tyrwhitt, Robert; Phillimore, Robert. *The Ecclesiastical Law*. Vol. 4. London: Sweet Stevens & Norton. p. 54.

<sup>41</sup>JCR - the Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin. Accessed August 24, 2022. <http://juchre.org/talmud/kiddushin/kiddushin3.htm#41a>.

<sup>42</sup>M. A. Friedman (1980), *Jewish Marriage in Palestine*, Vol. 1, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America

<sup>43</sup>“Ishut - Chapter Two - Texts & Writings - Chabad.” Accessed August 25, 2022.

[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/952875/jewish/Ishut-Chapter-Two.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/952875/jewish/Ishut-Chapter-Two.htm).

<sup>44</sup>Singh, Upinder (2008). *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. Pearson Education India. p. 420.

the Ottoman empire, the age of competence for marriage was set at 18 for boys and 17 for girls. The minimum age for competence was set at 12 for boys and 9 for girls. For most Middle Eastern countries following Sharia-based legislative law in the 20th Century, the minimum age was raised to 15 for boys and 13 for girls.<sup>45</sup>

Alternatively, even if religious law does not explicitly forbid child marriage, there are no instances of religious law promoting marriage involving children or necessitating these kinds of unions as evidence as devotion or religiosity.<sup>46</sup> Even if marriage is explicitly encouraged and/or early marriage is encouraged in religious doctrine, the need for marriage prior to puberty is not.

The following are a few examples of different laws enacted to combat child marriage. English common law was the one of the first legal systems to decry child marriage as a criminal activity. In 1275, sexual relations with girls under 14 were criminalized and in 1576, a new law was introduced to enact stricter punishment for relations with girls as young as 10.<sup>47</sup> In 1923, Egypt set age limits for marriage at 18 years old for boys and 16 for girls.<sup>48</sup> These ages were set without distinction between minimum age for marriage and competence for marriage, diverging from Sharia law primarily enacted in countries with former Ottoman ties. In each of these instances these laws were not enacted in response to concerns about gender equality; rather, they reflected increasing concern for the protection of children and the need to distinguish the limits of legal personhood (i.e. when an individual would be tried as an adult, rather than as a minor, or not at all.)<sup>49</sup>

In 2017, National Human Rights Watch declared that Afghanistan had stricter child marriage laws than the United States.<sup>50</sup> Article 71 of Afghan Civil Law states that marriage concerning minors younger than 15 are not allowed under any circumstances.<sup>51</sup> However, Sharia law often takes

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<sup>45</sup>Schacht, J.; Layish, A.; Shaham, R.; Ansari, Ghaus; Otto, J.M.; Pompe, S.; Knappert, J.; Boyd, Jean (1995). "Nikāh". In P. Bearman; Th. Bianquis; C.E. Bosworth; E. van Donzel; W.P. Heinrichs (eds.). *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Vol. 8 (2nd ed.). Brill. p. 29.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid

<sup>47</sup>Brown, Jonathan A.C. (2015). *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy*. Oneworld Publications (Kindle edition). pp. 3140–3150 (Kindle locations).

<sup>48</sup>Ibid

<sup>49</sup>Ibid

<sup>50</sup>"Afghanistan Has a Tougher Law on Child Marriage than Florida." Human Rights Watch, October 28, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/20/afghanistan-has-tougher-law-child-marriage-florida>.

<sup>51</sup>Mukhatari (2004). "Study on Child Marriage in Afghanistan" (PDF). *Medica Mondiale*: 1–20. Archived from the original (PDF) on 6 May 2012. Retrieved 15 March 2014.

precedence over Civil Law and neither are enforced more stringently than the cultural custom of child marriage, aided by religious leaders.<sup>52</sup> Saudi Arabia raised the minimum marriage age to 18 in 2019. Despite this, many Saudis in clerical positions argued that this distinction was one that could not be rightfully made and that readiness for marriage is still only determinable by judgment of the completion of puberty.<sup>53</sup> There are no universal guidelines or international standards for defining and preventing child marriage. However, UNICEF has established a proposed global model for ways that child marriage laws ought to be enforced. This program includes an established minimum age of marriage, suggested as 18 and requiring clear and freely given consent.<sup>54</sup> UNICEF also suggests a variety of criminal definitions of child marriage in order to ensure maximally effective prosecution while promoting prosecution of any kind under the aim of protecting children, who are otherwise vulnerable.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Smith, Deborah (2009). "Decisions, Desires and Diversity: Marriage Practices in Afghanistan". *Afghanistan Research & Evaluation Unit (AREU)*.

<sup>53</sup>Wael Mahdi (1 July 2009). "Saudi push to end child marriages". *The National*. Archived from the original on 3 May 2019. Retrieved 28 May 2019.

<sup>54</sup>"Child Marriage and the Law: Technical Note for the Global ... - UNICEF." Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/media/86311/file/Child-marriage-the-law-2020.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid

## Past Actions

CSW, in addition to UN Women, UNICEF, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (OHCHR) have been the UN suborgans primarily focused on child marriage. CSW was the first UN body or international organization of any kind that articulated the rights of women in marriage.<sup>56</sup> In 1957, the Commission held the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women and in 1962, the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages.

The 1957 Convention on the Nationality of Married Women passed a trailblazing resolution that articulated the independence of a wife outside of her husband and marriage, asserting the need for defined and protected autonomy of women within their relationships.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the resolution asserted the role of nations in protecting this autonomy, setting a precedent for marital issues to be discussed and defended in a public and transnational manner. The declaration also established the ability for nations to interpret and abide by the marital laws of other nations per their own understanding and legislation regarding marital unions.<sup>58</sup> While the majority of the resolution focused on the transference of nationality between spouses, or lack thereof, the proposed solutions insinuate a complex working relationship between marital laws in different countries. The same kind of international regulation and norm setting for child marriage laws can be defended and proposed in a similar manner as the norm setting done by this conference and resolution.

The 1963 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages begins with the assertion that any individual ought to be able to enter any marriage of their choosing.<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, the language used in this section of the resolution reads similarly to that which is often used in anti-discriminatory discourse today concerning gender equality (“No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person,”) rather than a distinction or assumption of gendered spousal roles - pretty impressive for 1963!<sup>60</sup> Although discriminatory marriage practices

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<sup>56</sup>“Commission on the Status of Women.” UN Women – Headquarters. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>.

<sup>57</sup>“Convention on the Nationality of Married Women - United Nations.” Accessed August 25, 2022. [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1958/08/19580811%2001-34%20AM/Ch\\_XVI\\_2p.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1958/08/19580811%2001-34%20AM/Ch_XVI_2p.pdf).

<sup>58</sup>Ibid

<sup>59</sup>“Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages.” OHCHR. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-consent-marriage-minimum-age-marriage-and>.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid

are not the primary focus of this committee, the concern of discriminatory behavior and attitudes within cultures surrounding marital prospects has been a consistently paralleled concern alongside child marriage.

Most important in this resolution is the explicit assertion and affirmation of a 1954 UN General Assembly conclusion: cultural and social norms that defend child marriage are still considered to be in violation of the UN's Charter and Universal Declaration Human Rights (UDHR).<sup>61</sup>

Child marriage violates Article 16 of UDHR:

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full **consent** of the intending spouses.<sup>62</sup>

Namely, that in a child marriage there is undeniable and unavoidable inequality between spouses, and that this inequality is caused and maintained by the marital institution itself. Secondly, child marriage eliminates the possibility of free or full consent as well as assumes that children are capable of consent at all.

The Convention on Consent of Marriage further ascribes the total cessation of child marriage via the elimination of nonautonomous customs and laws such that the following are ensured, "complete freedom in the choice of a spouse, eliminating completely child marriages and the betrothal of young girls before the age of puberty, establishing appropriate penalties where necessary and establishing a civil or other register in which all marriages will be recorded."<sup>63</sup>

In 1972, in honor of the Commission's 25th anniversary (and at the recommendation of the CSW), 1975 was declared by the UN General Assembly to be International Women's Year. The First World

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid

<sup>62</sup>"Universal Declaration of Human Rights." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights#:~:text=Drafted%20by%20representatives%20with%20different,all%20peoples%20and%20all%20nations.>

<sup>63</sup>Ibid

Conference on Women was held and the following decade (1976-1985) was declared to be the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Given its role in the facilitation of productive discourse towards gender equality, and its ongoing leadership in egalitarian advocacy, the priorities of the CSW, including ending child marriage, were furthered by these UN actions.<sup>64</sup>



Inauguration Ceremony from the First World Conference on Women (Mexico City, 1975)<sup>65</sup>

This included the global prioritization of solutions focused on gender-based violence. In 1993 the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, a culminating effort of the early World Conferences on Women. The Declaration specifically identified children as a group of women especially vulnerable to violence.<sup>66</sup> Further, sexual abuse of children, instances of violence relating to dowries, spousal violence, and marital rape were identified as critical examples of violence against women in need of urgent solutions.<sup>67</sup> The resolution also specified the

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid

<sup>65</sup>"The 1975 Mexico City World Conference on Women." Origins, June 1, 1970. [https://origins.osu.edu/connecting-history/world-conference-women-mexico-city?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://origins.osu.edu/connecting-history/world-conference-women-mexico-city?language_content_entity=en).

<sup>66</sup>"Ods Home Page." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/>.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid

need for support of these women and their children if and when they choose to flee, such that entrapment in lives of violence do not become the primary reason that violent systems and expectations are able to self-perpetuate.<sup>68</sup>



### Discrepancies in Practices and Law Regarding Child Marriage<sup>69</sup>

Past solutions for addressing child marriage have traditionally fallen into three areas: establishing a minimum marital age, creating an age of consent, and addressing customs and cultural norms that perpetuate, protect, and normalize child marriage. While each has had some degree of impact, none have successfully challenged the practice of child marriage in its entirety, nor eliminated it on a global scale. Individual countries have enacted laws to address child marriage as both civil and criminal infractions, with varying degrees of punitive measures in response. Around the world marriages occur as both civil and religious contracts.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid

<sup>69</sup>Hudson, Valerie M. "The Worst Places to Be a Woman." *Foreign Policy*, April 24, 2012. <https://foreignpolicy.com/slideshow/the-worst-places-to-be-a-woman/>

In addition to **secular law**, many countries struggle to prosecute child marriage because it necessitates contention between secular and religious law which is often already an ongoing struggle. Oftentimes, in the case of child marriage, even if the marriage is not recognized by secular law, it is permissible or even sanctified by religious law. Lastly, regardless of secular or religious laws that address marriage and child marriage specifically, oftentimes cultural norms and customs provide the fiercest protection of child marriage because they neglect to admit that there is a problem that needs solving at all. In some cases, criminalization and legal prosecution of child marriage has forced the practice underground, making it even more difficult to liberate women and girls from their homes. Given this, countries that have successfully decreased rates of child marriage have done so by pursuing a holistic combination of the above approaches. By combining legal and cultural reforms, child marriage reform advocates believe that shortcomings of each method might be balanced or addressed by an alternative approach.

## Possible Solutions

As mentioned previously, possible successful solutions for eradicating child marriage will necessitate a combination of legal and social reforms. Further, these solutions will not be unilaterally effective and each nation should consider the kinds of fundamental beliefs that have allowed child marriage to persist. The following actions have already been taken, in varying degrees, by different countries around the world. Although some have successfully reduced rates of child marriage, none have successfully eliminated the practice altogether. Many of these solutions present broad approaches to addressing certain aspects of child marriage's stronghold, but require specific distinctions (that you get to make!) to more accurately target unique challenges in different communities.

The two biggest examples of these kinds of variable-dependent solutions are minimum marital age and age of consent.<sup>70</sup> While different places around the world have identified these minimums to be anywhere from 15-21 years of age, the lack of a globally-accepted or understood minimum age of marriage and/or consent has made addressing the issue of child marriage all the more difficult.<sup>71,72</sup> A minimum marital age would enable child marriage to be defined succinctly and universally. Similarly, a minimum age of consent would determine whether or not child marriage can or should be prosecuted similarly to other forms of sexual and/or intimate partner violence.<sup>73</sup>

The determination of age limits for marriage and consent would also begin to build a legal structure through which child marriage may be persecuted internationally or within individual nations.<sup>74</sup> By creating and using more specific laws and legal constructions of child marriage during prosecution, this committee will be able to improve the processes by which individual nations may go about defining child marriages within their own legal systems, effectively creating a template for the criminalization of this practice. Within this structure, formalizing a chain of accountability would ensure adequate prosecution of those responsible for child marriage in different communities.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid

<sup>71</sup>“The Case for a Minimum Age of Marriage of 18.” Girls Not Brides. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/resource-centre/case-minimum-age-marriage-18/>.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid

<sup>73</sup>Ibid

<sup>74</sup>Ibid

<sup>75</sup>Ibid

Additionally, it would remove community leaders in positions of power who allow child marriages to continue.

Community leaders can still be held accountable for child marriage, even if not through legal avenues. Given that many child marriages are performed by religious leaders, working with religious and community leaders in areas with high rates of child marriage can greatly reduce the frequency with which these marriages are performed or encouraged.<sup>7677</sup> Furthermore, as cultural leaders, the choice to refuse to perform child marriages and act as a protector and advocate for vulnerable girls within the community is doubly valuable.<sup>78</sup> Religious leaders especially have tremendous sway over widely accepted cultural and social norms in their communities.

A large part of decreasing the prevalence of child marriage will require a restructuring of cultural norms that continue encouraging these kinds of marriages. Currently, many child marriages are performed as a way of alleviating financial stress in families.<sup>79</sup> By marrying off a daughter, families can transfer the financial burden to her husband, as well as sometimes receiving the benefit of a bride price in return.<sup>80</sup> In reality, child marriage often perpetuates cyclical poverty.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, being married off young eliminates the ability for young women to contribute to their family wealth, worsening the socioeconomic status of the family perhaps more so than that status prior to their birth.<sup>82</sup> By reforming the perspective of daughters as potential breadwinners and contributors to the family rather than financial dependents, child marriage will no longer seem like a viable option for prosperity. Reshaping these cultural perspectives is a slow process of overturning multigenerational expectations and norms. Public education campaigns are hugely important for adjusting cultural

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<sup>76</sup>“25 Million Child Marriages Prevented in Last Decade Due to Accelerated Progress, According to New UNICEF Estimates.” UNICEF. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/25-million-child-marriages-prevented-last-decade-due-accelerated-progress-according>.

<sup>77</sup>“Africa's Traditional Leaders Taking the Lead on Ending Child Marriage.” Save the Children. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/africas-leaders-take-lead-on-ending-child-marriage>.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid

<sup>79</sup>Reid, Kathryn. “Child Marriage: Facts, Faqs, and How to Help End It.” World Vision, June 5, 2020. <https://www.worldvision.org/child-protection-news-stories/child-marriage-facts#:~:text=Survival,give%20preference%20to%20boys'%20schooling>.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid

<sup>81</sup>“The Rippling Economic Impacts of Child Marriage.” World Bank Blogs. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/rippling-economic-impacts-child-marriage#:~:text=A%20new%20study%20finds%20that,before%20the%20age%20of%2018>.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid

expectations but oftentimes need to be accompanied by progressive political actions in order to successfully create lasting change.

In order for girls to successfully contribute to their families, they'll need to have the skills and experience necessary to compete for jobs and contribute to their communities.<sup>83</sup> The best way to do this is improve access to quality academic and vocational educations for girls in parts of the world where child marriage is especially prevalent. Furthermore, by having young girls learn in the same classrooms as boys (religious restrictions permitting), the expectation for egalitarianism is fostered from a young age, regardless of gender.<sup>84</sup>

Equality in education and professional development will then lead directly into improved gender equality in positions of authority.<sup>85</sup> While equality in all aspects of social life have been shown to positively correlate with low rates of child marriage, women in positions of authority will ensure that child marriages do not undergo a resurgence in the future.<sup>86</sup> This idea relates back to that of reshaping the cultural perception of daughters as financial burdens - by reintroducing women into society as positive beneficiaries, reducing girls to wives will seem inconceivable when compared to the contributions they could be making instead.

Lastly, while solutions to child marriage will need to focus on eliminating the practice, care and resources will need to be provided to young girls that have already been married off as child brides. This includes options for child brides looking to flee their husbands and communities and start fresh lives for themselves and their children, as well as child brides that are not interested in leaving their homes but can improve their livelihood. These kinds of resources include restructuring care and available opportunities for young women: increased focus on sexual and reproductive health and education, better maternal healthcare, and publicly placing increased importance on roles traditionally filled by women (midwives, agricultural work, childcare, work in the home) for starters.<sup>87</sup> In terms of options for women looking to leave their husbands, expedited public services that work

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid

<sup>84</sup>Ibid

<sup>85</sup>"How Empowering Girls Can Help End Child Marriage." Girls Not Brides. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/articles/empowering-girls-can-help-end-child-marriage/>.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid

<sup>87</sup>"Solutions to End Child Marriage - ICRW: Passion. Proof. Power." ICRW, March 23, 2022. <https://www.icrw.org/publications/solutions-to-end-child-marriage/>.

within domestic and international channels of political power and communication can be used to shape a system in which women are able to successfully and rapidly get out of their homes as well as have somewhere to go and successfully stay once they leave. An expedited passport processing or visa granting process exclusively for child brides would be an example of this kind of solution.

## Bloc Positions

Similar to the past solutions that have been used to address child marriage globally, blocs will be likely divided along the following: delegations with and without strong anti-child marriage social expectation and norms. Additionally, countries will likely divide themselves between those that primarily abide by religious laws rather than secular laws. The expectation being that those who abide by religious laws will need to focus more on solutions that challenge entrenched cultural norms. Furthermore, for countries that primarily follow secular laws but still have high rates of child marriage (the United States being a critical example of this), the need to create stronger, more restrictive secular laws will be a higher priority and promote bloc formation with countries that have similar religious-secular relationships to social influence.

Part of the solution to eliminating the institution of child marriage will also have to come from mechanisms that provide support for former child brides and fulfill the socioeconomic concerns that motivate child marriages in the first place. Delegations will also be split on this concern between those that share the same rehabilitation strategies and those that do not. Furthermore, in places that have high rates of child marriage that reflect similar high rates of gender inequality in society, addressing child marriage is only concerning a symptom of a much larger problem. Therefore, countries that are simultaneously attempting to combat broader egalitarian concerns will need to consider the kinds of social support they have, or lack, when attempting to enforce new measures that concern child marriage exclusively.

### ***North and South America***

Latin American countries have some of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. However, most international action combatting child marriage has prioritized countries in Africa and Asia rather than in South America. Accordingly, Latin America is the only region in the world that has not seen significant declines in child marriages in the past 30 years.<sup>88</sup> Honduras, which passed a bill outlawing child marriage in 2017, was the first country in the region to take significant action in curtailing this public health and safety crisis. Besides a lack of legal and/or social reforms, some

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<sup>88</sup>"Time to Get Serious about Child Marriage in Latin America." Human Rights Watch, October 28, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/07/13/time-get-serious-about-child-marriage-latin-america>.

South American countries including Chile, Argentina, and Venezuela do not provide data on child marriage to the UN, making it even more difficult to enact change.<sup>89</sup>

The United States does not currently have any federal laws that address child marriage. While Canada has made it illegal to celebrate, aid, or participate in child marriage, the United States only has individual state laws concerned with this issue.<sup>90</sup> Currently, only six states have set the minimum age of marriage at 18 and excluded any exceptions, which means that in the remaining 44 states, child marriages have the potential to be fully recognized by the state as both legitimate and legal.<sup>91</sup> Although child marriage in the US is declining, and certainly does not occur at rates as high as those in other parts of the world, the inconsistency between social norms, gender equality in positions of authority, and high rates of child marriage are shocking.<sup>92</sup>

## ***Africa***

In 2018, UNICEF launched a concerted effort to eliminate child marriage in the African continent. This project yielded the following data: 1/3 of African women were married before their 18th birthday.<sup>93</sup> Of the ten countries in the world with the highest rates of child marriage, nine of them are African countries.<sup>94</sup> In Western Africa, over 40% of women are child brides, and within this subregion of the continent, child brides are usually younger.<sup>95</sup> The world's highest rates of child marriage involving girls younger than 15 occur in this region.<sup>96</sup> Four of the seven countries with the highest rates of child marriage in Africa (above 50% of marriages), (specifically Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, and South Sudan) have not seen any significant declines in the frequency of

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid

<sup>90</sup>Government of Canada, Department of Justice. "Child Abuse Is Wrong: What Can I Do?" Department of Justice - Child Abuse is Wrong: What Can I Do? - Forced marriage, December 6, 2021. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/caw-mei/p10.html#:~:text=Underage%20marriage&text=It%20is%20a%20crime%20in,another%20country%20to%20be%20married.>

<sup>91</sup>Ibid

<sup>92</sup>"Child Marriage – Shocking Statistics." Unchained At Last, November 2, 2021. [https://www.unchainedatlast.org/child-marriage-shocking-statistics/.](https://www.unchainedatlast.org/child-marriage-shocking-statistics/)

<sup>93</sup>Arora, Anshana. "Accelerating Efforts to Eliminate Child Marriage in Africa." UNICEF DATA, August 3, 2021. [https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-in-africa-brochure-2018/.](https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-in-africa-brochure-2018/)

<sup>94</sup>Ibid

<sup>95</sup>Ibid

<sup>96</sup>Ibid

this practice.<sup>97</sup> However, child marriages account for less than 10% of marriages in the following countries: Algeria, Djibouti, Eswatini, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Tunisia.<sup>98</sup> According to a 2018 UNICEF report, at the current rate of reduction in child marriage, it will take over 100 years to eliminate this practice in the African continent alone.<sup>99</sup>

## **Asia**

Although many South Asian countries have laws preventing child marriage, child marriage continues to persist at high rates in many of these places.<sup>100</sup> These high rates are primarily attributed to child marriage being a well-accepted cultural practice that reflects dominant patriarchal norms in many of these countries.<sup>101</sup> India is one country in which anti-child marriage campaigns that focused on reforming cultural practices and perspectives on child marriage proved to be more effective than introducing legal reforms.<sup>102</sup> The prevalence of child marriage also reflects traditional wedding customs with clear patriarchal roots that are still practiced today, such as bride prices and dowries. Many activists have cited the importance of custom, and its role as being both more significant and harder to reform in the fight against child marriage.<sup>103</sup>

Child marriage is most common in the Southeast region of Asia. In China, for example, child marriage rates are low. China has long been an advocate against child marriage, enacting its first marriage law in 1950 as well as participating in multiple UN resolutions that support eradicating child marriage.<sup>104</sup> Despite this, child marriage does manage to persist in some provinces, primarily attributable to a long history of Chinese social norms that permitted and even encouraged early marriage prior to the 20th century.

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid

<sup>98</sup>Ibid

<sup>99</sup>Ibid

<sup>100</sup>Deutsche Welle. "South Asia Is Home to Highest Number of Child Brides: DW: 29.11.2013." DW.COM. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/en/south-asia-is-home-to-highest-number-of-child-brides/a-17256037#:~:text=Child%20marriage%20is%20prohibited%20by,But%20the%20practice%20persists%20unabatedly.>

<sup>101</sup>Ibid

<sup>102</sup>Ibid

<sup>103</sup>Ibid

<sup>104</sup>A,; Fan S; Qian Y; Koski. "Child Marriage in Mainland China." *Studies in family planning*. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Accessed August 24, 2022. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35118678/>.

## **Europe**

In 2018, many countries in the European Union began working on a plan to eradicate child marriage by 2030, in line with the UN's 2030 timeline for achieving its **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. While several Western European countries have banned child marriage outright (the Netherlands, Sweden, and Germany), many other countries in the EU have loopholes in their governing systems, allowing for some instances of child marriage to remain legal.<sup>105</sup> While rates of child marriage in Europe are generally some of the lowest in the world, many Eastern European nations, which abide by patriarchal social structures and norms, have maintained child marriage as a regular practice.<sup>106</sup> There is additional concern that rates of child marriage in Europe may be much higher, given that many child marriages are unregistered and are therefore unaccounted for in data collection.<sup>107</sup> Many European countries have opted for systemic reform in the form of resources for young girls and brides including safety hotlines, a focus on keeping girls in school, and the construction of stricter penalties for adults involved with child marriages.

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<sup>105</sup>"European Parliament Committee Urges End to Child Marriage." Human Rights Watch, October 28, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/16/european-parliament-committee-urges-end-child-marriage#:~:text=Several%20countries%20%E2%80%93%20the%20Netherlands%2C%20Germany,to%20marry%20under%20some%20circumstances.>

<sup>106</sup>"Preventing Child Marriage." UNICEF Europe and Central Asia, June 24, 2021. [https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/child-marriage.](https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/child-marriage)

<sup>107</sup>Ibid

## Glossary

**Autonomy** - The express ability to be completely self-controlled or self-governed; entirely independent and free of obstacles to choosing for oneself

**Child marriage** - The marital union concerning at least spouse-to-be that is by all accounts a child

**Codification (of law)** - The formalization and strategic creation of an official system

**Consent** - Permission or agreement for an action or change to take place

**Gender roles** - Social expectations of actions, desires, and interest that are determined by traditional constraints based on gendered behavior, often corresponding to expectations regarding domestic work and obligations

**Egalitarianism** - Total equality; in this committee it will be considered with equality in light of differences perpetuated on the pretense of gender inequality

**Puberty** - The physio-emotional process of maturation that enables individuals to successfully sexually reproduce

**Religious law** - Codes of conduct established by a religion, often used by those who practice the religion to set boundaries and expectations for appropriate behavior

**Secular law** - Codes of conduct established by governments or other secular institutions capable of enforcing laws, often reflective of social values and norms that may be rooted in religious practice but not legally defended by religion

**Social norms** - Broadly shared, expected and accepted behavioral and emotional actions that occur in social setting; not always codified in law but commonly understood as normal expectations of conduct

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## TOPIC B: COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY PLANNING

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### Statement of the Problem

Comprehensive **family planning** addresses two major concerns for women around the world - **autonomy** and empowerment. Having the tools, information, and access to individually decide when and how someone might have their children is critical for ensuring that each woman may make her own choice.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, family planning seeks to protect that choice as something that is made by each woman, rather than by her spouse or family members.<sup>109</sup> While family planning has been used as a way to exercise control over women's bodies, it can also be a tremendous path towards emotional and physical autonomy, a means to protect young mothers, and a tool for improved health overall.<sup>110</sup>

Family planning is the process by which individuals and couples may intentionally choose when and how many children they have, achieved through **contraceptive** methods.<sup>111</sup> While the origins of family planning in many Eastern countries were in response to concerns of overpopulation, family planning has been heralded as a tool for female empowerment and autonomy in the Western world for decades.<sup>112</sup> The aim of this committee will be to identify solutions that transform family planning in Eastern countries into express opportunities for female empowerment rather than an indirect tool for the expression of imperialism through physical restrictions in women's bodies.

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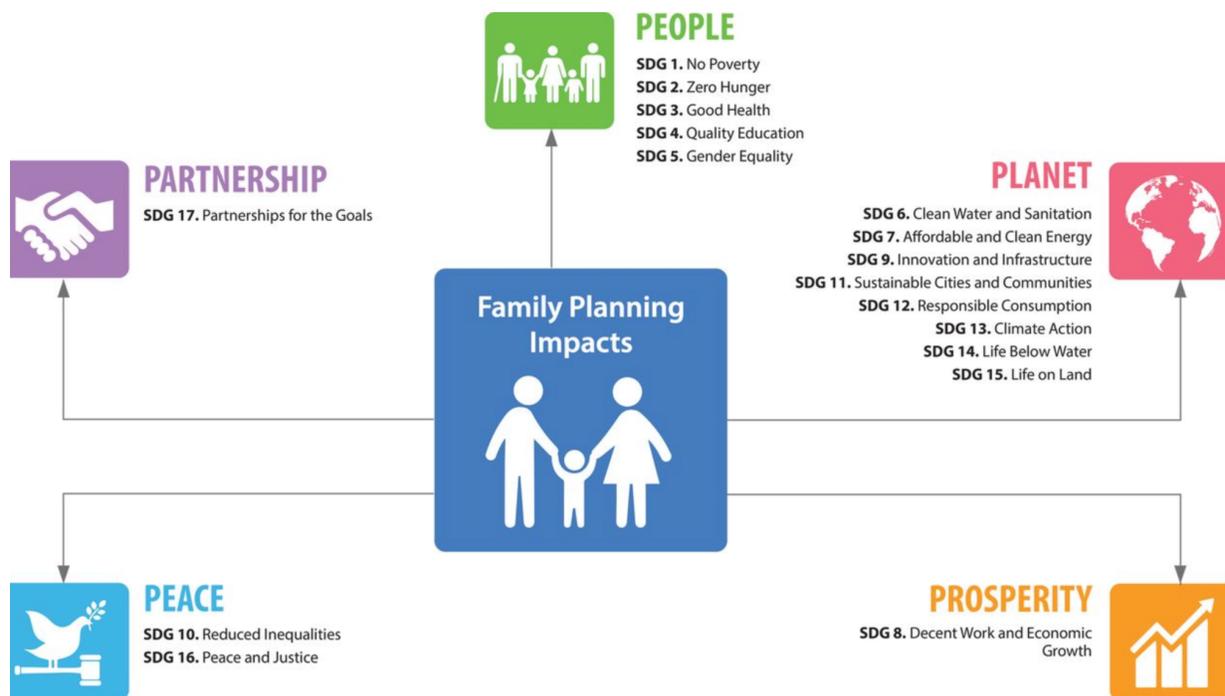
<sup>108</sup>"Family Planning." United Nations Population Fund. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.unfpa.org/family-planning>.

<sup>109</sup>"Investing in Family Planning: Key to Achieving the Sustainable ..." Accessed August 25, 2022. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303906660\\_Investing\\_in\\_Family\\_Planning\\_Key\\_to\\_Achieving\\_the\\_Sustainable\\_Development\\_Goals](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303906660_Investing_in_Family_Planning_Key_to_Achieving_the_Sustainable_Development_Goals).

<sup>110</sup>Ibid

<sup>111</sup>Ibid

<sup>112</sup>Ibid



### Impacts of Family Planning<sup>113</sup>

Conversations surrounding family planning focus heavily on contraception and contraceptive practices. This is a topic that is currently being discussed with extreme scrutiny in the United States. **The aim of this committee will not be to discuss the merits of contraception.** Rather, this committee will examine the ways in which contraception can and has been used as a tool for women’s bodily autonomy around the world. While I encourage you all to think about how family planning may impact your lives outside of the committee room, please remember that within committee, discussion should be focused on contraception as an element of family planning for countries around the world and as a tool by which women can exercise control over their fertility, physical health, and role in the family. Although I hope this background guide and topic spark your own interest in family planning, I encourage you to leave your assumptions about contraception behind and come to committee ready to learn and challenge yourselves.

<sup>113</sup>“Syracuse University Surface.” Accessed August 25, 2022.  
<https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=ia>.



Family Planning Promotional Postage Stamp<sup>114</sup>

One of the most pressing challenges this committee will need to discuss is the ways in which similar family planning methods are used around the world. The IUD, or intrauterine device, is a prime example of the ways in which family planning tools can have variable results. In many Western countries, including the United States, the IUD is seen as a main tool of female autonomy and empowerment, a simple and effective form of contraception, and a symbol of feminism.<sup>115</sup> In many Eastern countries however, the IUD was often routinely inserted after pregnancy to inhibit future

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<sup>114</sup> "What services do family planning clinics provide?". NHS. Archived from the original on 11 November 2014. Retrieved 8 March 2008.

<sup>115</sup>World Health Organization (2018). "Family planning/Contraception". *World Health Organization Newsroom*. Retrieved 6 March 2018.

pregnancies.<sup>116</sup> These routine insertions were done without the consent of the women receiving them and refusal to remove IUDs was standard.<sup>117</sup>

One of the biggest concerns regarding contraception is access versus autonomy. Even in instances where women opt-in to reversible forms of inserted contraception, this still leaves them at the mercy of whichever clinics are available, with limited accessibility to properly trained medical care providers. In addition to the IUD, the implant is an extremely effective form of birth control, but can be intimidating for women who are unsure about how long they would like to use contraception. Alternatively, birth control options like condoms or hormonal pills require consistent access to providers. Oftentimes uninhibited access and flexibility for contraceptive options are only available to women and families of means. Accordingly, socioeconomic status is one of the best indicators we can use to determine why or how family planning and contraceptive usage may be improved in different countries and communities.

In the instance of IUD usage, the exact same device is being used in two different parts of the world with incredibly different results in terms of empowerment. However, contraceptive access, whether inhibited by legal restriction, geographic distance, or cultural stigma, is only one aspect of family planning. Sex education, equality in access to general education, professional resources that ensure healthy mothers and babies, and sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and preventative care, are all essential elements of family planning that require attention as well. The aim of this committee will be to identify family planning goals such as these and determine effective solutions that improve the autonomy of women and girls' bodies. In addition to correcting these solutions to properly meet the aims of family planning, this committee will produce additional solutions and approaches to furthering family planning worldwide.

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid

<sup>117</sup>Ibid

## History of the Problem

This topic will be covered in the background guide in two different ways. The first will be an explanation of family planning as a concept - the practice and actions of family planning, the kinds of goals and behaviors associated with it, and why or how different courses of family planning are commonly seen around the world. Secondly, family planning will be discussed in the context of the United Nations as a tool and campaign by which the UN has pursued its vision for a better world. Family planning was not invented by the UN and while different UN bodies have focused on various aspects of this topic, ultimately family planning has a long and complicated history. The aim of this committee's discussion of family planning will be to focus on equity in opportunities for successful family planning practices including but not limited to improved maternal health, safer births and post-pregnancy care, access to contraception, quality and empowering education about all aspects of reproductive and sexual health, and autonomy for birthing people.

Family planning is the intentional practice by which an individual or couple proceed to have children (or not) with the use of contraception and fertility awareness to appropriately time, space, or altogether avoid pregnancy. Family planning includes education about sexual health, proper attention to STIs, and infertility care.<sup>118</sup> While abortion and other aspects of terminating a pregnancy are elements of family planning, it is by no means promoted as a form of contraception or as a solution for better-timed pregnancy. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Family planning/contraception reduces the need for abortion, especially unsafe abortion."<sup>119</sup> The UN considers family planning as all services and attention that occur prior to conception.<sup>120</sup> In this committee, you are encouraged to think beyond contraception when debating this topic. While family planning is often used as a synonym for contraception, family planning is really a reconstruction of all things reproduction by which women can be empowered in their bodily autonomy.

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid

<sup>119</sup>Ibid

<sup>120</sup>"Population Division |." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/>.

Early forms of family planning included intentionally-spacing pregnancies, accomplished by varying contraceptive methods. In Djenne, West Africa in the early 16th century, women were encouraged to wait three years between pregnancies to protect their bodies and health, as well as the health of their children.<sup>121</sup> Contraception is the primary way that many women choose to plan or avoid pregnancy. Contraceptive practices including abstaining from sexual intercourse, the “pull-out” method, or tracking menstrual cycles have been used for as long as anyone has thought about getting pregnant. Barrier contraception like the condom or diaphragm method have also been used as options. More modern forms of contraception include hormonal contraceptives in various forms, IUDs (intrauterine devices), and surgery on reproductive organs (vasectomy or tubal ligation).

## Contraception methods



Different Forms of Contraception<sup>122</sup>

The modern family planning movement, at least in the United States, is often credited to Margaret Sanger. Sanger’s work began in the early part of the 20th century and continued until she passed away in 1966. Sanger is considered the founder Planned Parenthood and while she did promote the

<sup>121</sup>McKissack, Patricia; McKissack, Fredrick (1995). *The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay Life in Medieval Africa*. Macmillan. p. 104. ISBN 978-0-8050-4259-7.

<sup>122</sup>“Family Planning.” Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Hawaii. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.hmhb-hawaii.org/information/family-planning/>.

use of contraception and health awareness, she did so with eugenicist and racist intentions.<sup>123</sup>

Sanger became an international spokesperson for family planning, with her work in the United States inspiring similar reproductive care campaigns around the globe. However, many of the family planning campaigns that occurred in the 20th Century were motivated by individuals who, like Sanger, were interested in inhibiting the ability of certain groups of people to reproduce.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, research and developments in contraception were often done with the intention of inhibiting pregnancy in “inferior” groups. While much of family planning has been reclaimed as an empowering choice, practices like routine IUD insertion, forced sterilization and genital mutilation are remnants of family planning’s dark past.

**This committee will have a zero-tolerance policy regarding non-consensual family planning of any kind.** We would also encourage solutions that restore justice for families and communities that were subject to these kinds of campaigns historically. Family planning, while part of global concerns regarding population size and growth, are ultimately deeply personal choices that should be made independently with the best interests of individual families in mind. While external sources like governments, non-profits, or even the United Nations may encourage or promote certain practices, the choice should ultimately be made by individual women and their families.

Because family planning and contraception have been practiced by individuals for so long, the history of family planning that we ought to consider in this committee will be the encouragement of the practice by the organized actions of different nations. These kinds of nation-wide campaigns and movements introduced aspects other than contraception to family planning, with many primarily focusing on resources that came from outside the bedroom, including but not limited to education, counseling, cultural and community norms and ideas.<sup>125</sup> Most family planning campaigns launched in the 20th century as both women’s empowerment and gender equality became issues at the

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<sup>123</sup>Latson, Jennifer. “Margaret Sanger, Race and Eugenics: A Complicated History.” Time. Time, October 14, 2016. <https://time.com/4081760/margaret-sanger-history-eugenics/>.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid

<sup>125</sup>“2019 Family Planning Data Sheet Highlights Family Planning Method Use around the World.” PRB. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.prb.org/resources/2019-family-planning-data-sheet-highlights-family-planning-method-use-around-the-world/>.

forefront of global interest.<sup>126</sup> Family planning campaigns were also a response to concerns about overpopulation which continue to be a big concern for many countries around the world.<sup>127</sup>

Important to note, family planning and contraceptive use specifically have been the subject of much religious debate.<sup>128</sup> While contraception and interfering with the timing of pregnancy may be seen as sacrilegious to some, other aspects of family planning that focus on prioritizing reproductive health, safety of the mother, and improving fertility or other avenues to expanding family (like adoption) are not usually seen as an issue.<sup>129</sup> Some countries that abide by religious law or have strongly influenced socio-religious norms have found other ways to curb pregnancies. Ireland, for example, found a small decrease in pregnancy when there was an uptick in participation of women in the labor force.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid

<sup>127</sup>Ibid

<sup>128</sup>Sundararajan, Radhika, Lauren Mica Yoder, Albert Kihunrwa, Christine Aristide, Samuel E. Kalluvya, David J. Downs, Agrey H. Mwakisole, and Jennifer A. Downs. "How Gender and Religion Impact Uptake of Family Planning: Results from a Qualitative Study in Northwestern Tanzania - BMC Women's Health." BioMed Central. BioMed Central, July 22, 2019. <https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-019-0802-6#:~:text=Most%2owho%2ofound%2ofamily%2oplanning,by%2olimiting%2othe%2ofamily%2osize.>

<sup>129</sup>Ibid

<sup>130</sup>O'Brien, Carl (19 December 2011). "ESRI says fertility rate is greatly underestimated". The Irish Times.

## Past Actions

The majority of UN-administered family planning initiatives and campaigns have been primarily exercised through the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). This does not mean that family planning is outside the scope of CSW. UNFPA has traditionally followed and focused its programs on values and aims that were previously articulated as priorities by the CSW. The past actions that we will be building on in this committee will include actions taken by both UN branches. At the UNFPA-hosted, International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, passed by the CSW in 1981) was used as evidence to defend a woman's right to reproductive care as a fundamental part of defending women's autonomy more broadly.<sup>131</sup> As many women's movements have said historically, "Women's rights are human rights." In this committee, reproductive rights are human rights as well.

In August of 1974, the UN passed the World Population Plan of Action in response to growing concerns about global population growth. While the plan did cite family planning as an effective response to concerns about population growth, there was a clear emphasis on a greater need for equity in access to family planning resources.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, practices such as forced sterilization, inadequate education, and/or disparity in rationales for family sizing (government pressure, economic pressure, etc.) were all cited as challenges that were as equally concerning as rising birth rates.<sup>133</sup> The World Population Plan investigated socioeconomic factors that would influence birth rates as a way to address these concerns. Many of the most pressing concerns for family planning (access to reproductive and medical care, availability and variety of contraceptives, informational sexual education, social stigma, and the role of governments in providing these services) came up in conversations about population dynamics and control.<sup>134</sup> The World Population Plan of Action proposed that while birth rates are a socioeconomic concern, family planning is a human right:

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<sup>131</sup>"Rights to Sexual and Reproductive Health." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/shalev.htm>.

<sup>132</sup>World Population Plan of Action - United Nations." Accessed August 25, 2022. [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/E\\_CONF.60\\_19\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/E_CONF.60_19_Plan.pdf).

<sup>133</sup>Ibid

<sup>134</sup>Ibid

All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so;...Women have the right to complete integration in the development process particularly by means of an equal access to education and equal participation in social, economic, cultural and political life.<sup>135</sup>

The Plan of Action focused on individual countries promoting educational programs as well as public health initiatives that would ensure equity in access and equality in resources provided. The underlying goal being that reproductive services in any country, regardless of that country's own socioeconomic status, would be able to provide a standard of care that would reinforce the UN's preventive focus on population growth. The Plan outlined an approach for international strategies that would promote social and economic reforms where necessary in order for this population plan to thrive.

India has been a country subject to especially heightened levels of scrutiny regarding family planning by both the UN and the broader global community. Incredibly high rates of population growth in India can largely be attributed to the central role that family members often play in personal economic growth - children can be sent to work, care for other children while parents work, and eventually be able to provide for their parents as they age.<sup>136</sup> India was one of the first countries to adopt family planning as a national socio-economic policy, bringing the practice to a national level in 1952.<sup>137</sup> However, national family planning campaigns have been the focus of much international attention given the often non-consensual nature as well as the clear disparities in its practice between different socioeconomic groups.<sup>138</sup>

In order to meet lofty goals set by national administration, sterilization and sterilization bribery as well as mandatory routine IUD insertion post-labor and delivery became normalized throughout India during the following two decades.<sup>139</sup> Many Indian women continue to experience health side

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<sup>135</sup>Ibid

<sup>136</sup>"Family Planning in India: Alternative Approaches." Down To Earth. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/governance/family-planning-in-india-alternative-approaches-56000>.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid

<sup>138</sup>"Home - PMC - NCBI." National Center for Biotechnology Information. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid

effects from these forced sterilizations, creating another public health crisis. While sterilization on a mass scale is certainly an effective way of curbing population growth, it also presents tremendous safety risks and concerns. In addition to sterilization and routine-IUD insertion, India also embarked on a series of public education campaigns that were successful in promoting family planning as a necessary practice.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, in addition to public efforts to improve gender equality through increased education, family planning became another avenue for women and girls to experience greater autonomy and prosperity independent of their husbands and fathers.<sup>141</sup>



Image From a Sterilization Camp in India<sup>142</sup>

Similar to Indian public education campaigns regarding reproductive health and safety, Bangladesh has seen great success in addressing population concerns via family welfare assistance.<sup>143</sup> Bangladesh has managed to achieve one of the lowest total fertility rates in South Asia by utilizing a network of family welfare assistance volunteers who meet with families, going door-to-door to advise citizens about contraceptive usage. Family welfare assistance programs also provide free

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<sup>140</sup>Ibid

<sup>141</sup>Ibid

<sup>142</sup>"Indian Doctors Respond to Sterilizations." The New York Times. The New York Times, November 12, 2014. <https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/asia/100000003230616/indian-doctors-respond-to-sterilizations.html>

<sup>143</sup>"Bangladesh's Family Planning Success Stories: A Gender Perspective." Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/journals/2113295.pdf>.

contraceptive devices as they promote whatever kind of contraceptive fits each family's needs, emphasizing a priority on the mother's health and wellbeing above all else.<sup>144</sup>

In 1970, the United States created the Title X Family Program, a grant program that would provide confidential and comprehensive family planning services and prioritize low-income families and individuals, as well as public health centers.<sup>145</sup> Services that could be funded through grant money included contraceptive care such as counseling and provision, reproductive cancer screenings such as breast, cervical, or testicular cancers, STI testing and treatment, and pregnancy diagnosis and continuous care. Title X has been cited as an important equalizer in access to reproductive care as well as a marker that family planning services remain a top priority for the country.<sup>146</sup> In 2019, the Trump Administration placed a gag rule on the policy that was reversed in 2021 by the US Department of Health and Human Services. In addition to reversing the gag rule, the ruling reinforced Title X's inclusion of abortion care within the parameters of family planning and reproductive healthcare.<sup>147</sup>

Title X was the United States' answer to socioeconomic disparity in family planning resources; the Banjar system was Indonesia's solution. The Indonesian Family Planning Program was organized by the country's government and used village family planning groups, led by a village organizer (Banjar) to promote family planning practices and increase contraceptive usage.<sup>148</sup> Through this program, families were encouraged to decrease the number of children they were planning to have, as well as to wait longer between pregnancies in order to ensure and promote maternal health.<sup>149</sup> The Banjar program included and actively involved community religious leaders which enabled Indonesia to promote family planning to its Muslim population.<sup>150</sup> With the support of Muslim leaders, Indonesia

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<sup>144</sup>Ibid

<sup>145</sup>"What Is Title X? an Explainer." Physicians for Reproductive Health. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://prh.org/what-is-title-x-an-explainer/>.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid

<sup>147</sup>Baker, Carrie N. "Trump's Title X Gag Rule Reversed by HHS: 'Patients Deserve Accurate and Comprehensive Information about Their Health Options.'" *Ms. Magazine*, October 7, 2021. <https://msmagazine.com/2021/10/07/title-x-domestic-gag-rule-trump-biden-hhs-abortion-funding-womens-health-care/>.

<sup>148</sup>Warwick, Donald P. "The Indonesian Family Planning Program: Government Influence and Client Choice." *Population and Development Review* 12, no. 3 (1986): 453–90. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1973219>.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid

<sup>150</sup>Peterson, Russell W. "Family Planning in Poor Nations." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, August 2, 1976. <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/08/02/archives/family-planning-in-poor-nations.html>.

was able to increase its contraceptive rate to approximately 60% between 1976 and 2002, enabling it to have one of the most successful family planning programs in the world.<sup>151</sup>



Contraceptive Education in Indonesia Being Led by a Midwife<sup>152</sup>

Alternatively, in 1978, China embarked upon one of the most well-known family planning operations. Faced with the largest population in the world, China approved a proposal for family planning offices to encourage couples to have one child, or at most two, in 1978.<sup>153</sup> The “one-child” policy began to be implemented in 1979, following a national conference on family planning. This policy was supported by systematized reinforcements, such as providing extra food rations for couples who only had one child.<sup>154</sup> In the following years, the one-child policy was reinforced in a variety of ways until the Chinese government decided to move away from the policy in 2008.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>151</sup>Indonesia's Family Planning Program: From Stagnation to ... - Devex." Accessed August 25, 2022.

<https://www.devex.com/news/indonesia-s-family-planning-program-from-stagnation-to-revitalization-84387>.

<sup>152</sup>Desmon, Stephanie. "Indonesian Government Adopts CCP Family Planning Model." Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, May 17, 2021. <https://ccp.jhu.edu/2019/09/09/family-planning-indonesian-government/>.

<sup>153</sup>Goldman, Russell. "From One Child to Three: How China's Family Planning Policies Have Evolved." The New York Times. The New York Times, May 31, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/31/world/asia/china-child-policy.html>.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid

<sup>155</sup>Ibid

In 2015, the one-child policy was officially ended in an effort to build up the country's labor force once again. Since then, many have predicted tremendous demographic, economic, and potential political crises in the near future due to this family-planning campaign given the extreme difference between the rapidly aging and limited potential workers who were born while the policy was in effect.<sup>156</sup> Although the one-child policy represents an extreme instance of family planning, it presents a unique example of how socioeconomic factors contribute to expected reproductive norms, and how reproductive health can in turn affect the prosperity of both families and the communities they come from.

Most recently, the UN has partnered with nonprofits and companies who provide health supplies and services to better promote and implement family planning initiatives. In 2021, Bayer, the international pharmaceutical company, partnered with the UNFP in Egypt to support the "Your Right to Plan" campaign.<sup>157</sup> The campaign, organized by Egypt's Ministry of Health and Population, is aimed at improving access to family planning information and reproductive health services for underserved communities. Bayer, in addition to a large donation, is contributing OB/GYN and pediatric medical services and contraceptive supplies as part of this campaign. This program was developed with the intention of increasing family planning in Egypt, which currently has the eighth highest birth rate in the world.<sup>158</sup> Bayer sought out the partnership, having long participated in public and private campaigns to empower women to make independent family planning choices while simultaneously breaking down cycles of poverty. Supplies and care will be distributed within communities through mobile clinics, with a particular focus on rural areas.<sup>159</sup> Educational campaigns will have a specific focus on spousal engagement, to encourage men to participate in family planning and support their wives' choices, to ensure maximally successful adoption of family planning practices in the home.

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<sup>156</sup>Ibid

<sup>157</sup>Communications, Bayer AG. Bayer announces partnership with the United Nations Population Fund Egypt to support the Ministry of Health and population's 'your right to plan' campaign in Egypt on World Contraception Day. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://media.bayer.com/baynews/baynews.nsf/id/Bayer-Middle-East-announces-partnership-United-Nations-Population-Fund-Egypt-support-Ministry-Health>.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid

<sup>159</sup>Ibid

## Possible Solutions

As made clear by past solutions, family planning campaigns have traditionally been pursued in the interest of population concerns. In this committee, we would like to see family planning approached as an opportunity for greater female empowerment, equality between spouses in decisions that affect the wellbeing of entire families, and greater bodily autonomy allowing women and girls to pursue their interests outside of the home.<sup>160</sup> Solutions for family planning will primarily fall into two approaches: improved distribution and access to family planning resources, and care and informational campaigns that promote and maintain family planning.



Essential Components of Family Planning<sup>161</sup>

Within these two approaches to solutions, individual nations and regions will need to adjust the kinds of resources and reasoning used to promote family planning. For example, in religious communities,

<sup>160</sup>Kohan S, Talebian F, Ehsanpour S. Association between women's autonomy and family planning outcome in couples residing in Isfahan. Iran J Nurs Midwifery Res. 2014 Sep;19(5):451-5. PMID: 25400671; PMCID: PMC4223960.

<sup>161</sup>Adedini, Sunday A., Stella Babalola, Charity Ibeawuchi, Olukunle Omotoso, Akinsewa Akiode, and Mojisola Odeku. "Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Contraceptive Use in Nigeria: Evidence from the Nigerian Urban Reproductive Health Initiative." Global Health: Science and Practice. Global Health: Science and Practice, October 3, 2018. <https://www.ghspjournal.org/content/6/3/500#:~:text=Many%2oreligious%2oleaders%2ohold%2obeliefs,well%2Dbeing%2oof%2otheir%2ocommunities.>

interfering with potential pregnancy in any way may not be considered acceptable.<sup>162</sup> In this case, solutions should focus on sexual health literacy and improving maternal health, as well as engaging religious leaders in promoting family planning practices.<sup>163</sup> In places where family planning has historically been achieved through non-consensual measures, new solutions should be sensitive to this difficult past.<sup>164</sup> Educational campaigns should work to reframe family planning as something that is ultimately economically and socially beneficial for women, girls, and couples that choose to consciously plan pregnancies.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, these campaigns should discuss alternative options to contraception (condoms, hormonal pills, or cycle-tracking rather than IUDs) as well as the importance of STI prevention and treatment.

Involving community leaders in family planning campaigns has been shown to greatly improve the success of these programs. When introducing solutions to the committee, identifying the kinds of community leaders that are best suited to participating and supporting these programs will be important in ensuring the success of these programs.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, public health and education campaigns led by national governments are essential for ensuring proper distribution of family planning resources.<sup>167</sup> Making sure that governments view family planning as a necessary cost and use funds to properly finance programs that elevate bodily autonomy and reproductive empowerment is essential. Government funding is especially important for ensuring that women, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have access to family planning resources.

Beyond government financing and working within community norms, acquiring an adequate amount of family planning medical materials (IUDs and insertion materials such as gloves, speculum and lubricants, STI test collection options like swabs or urine receptacles, hormonal birth control pills, condoms, and diaphragms, etc.) presents a tremendous obstacle to successful implementation. Partnering with companies and nonprofit organizations that specialize in sexual and reproductive

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<sup>162</sup>Ismail S, Shajahan A, Sathyanarayana Rao TS, Wylie K. Adolescent sex education in India: Current perspectives. *Indian J Psychiatry*. 2015 Oct-Dec;57(4):333-7. doi: 10.4103/0019-5545.171843. PMID: 26816418; PMCID: PMC4711229.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid

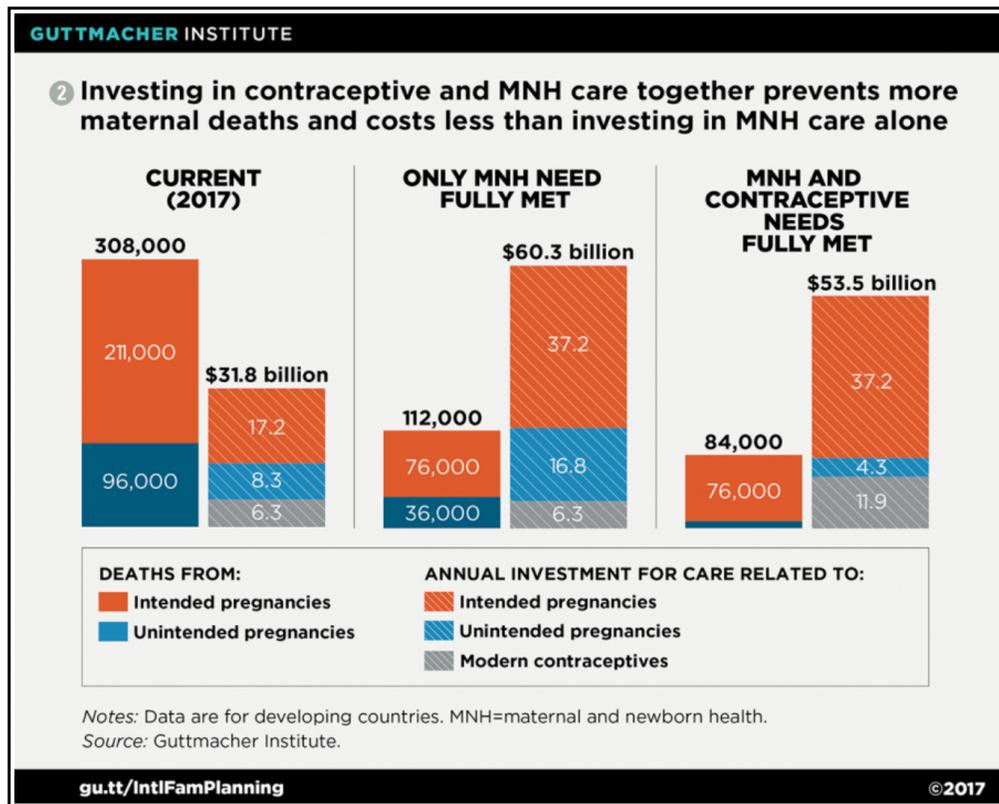
<sup>164</sup>Kristof, Nicholas. "Organizations Working on Family Planning." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, April 7, 2009. <https://archive.nytimes.com/kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/07/organizations-working-on-family-planning/>.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid

<sup>166</sup>Ibid

<sup>167</sup>Barot, Sneha. "The Benefits of Investing in International Family Planning-and the Price of Slashing Funding." *Guttmacher Institute*, October 4, 2018. <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2017/08/benefits-investing-international-family-planning-and-price-slashing-funding>.

wellness has historically been essential for ensuring the quantities of quality medical supplies necessary for successful family planning.<sup>168</sup> Additionally, determining how individuals will access these supplies is just as important as stockpiling the supplies themselves. Will rural communities have the same ease of access as urban communities? If not, what is the best way to provide them to these families? If remote clinics and mobile healthcare units are used to supply products, education, and medical services to rural areas, how will these spaces be kept sanitary? These will be important questions to consider while developing your solutions.



### Unmet Costs of International Family Planning Around the World<sup>169</sup>

Successful family planning requires complete cooperation and support between spouses. Without the involvement of male spouses especially, implementing family planning practices in the home

<sup>168</sup>Najafi-Sharjabad F, Rahman HA, Hanafiah M, Syed Yahya SZ. Spousal communication on family planning and perceived social support for contraceptive practices in a sample of Malaysian women. *Iran J Nurs Midwifery Res.* 2014 Feb;19(7 Suppl 1):S19-27. PMID: 25949248; PMCID: PMC4402996.

<sup>169</sup>“World Fertility and Family Planning 2020: Highlights - United Nations.” Accessed August 25, 2022. [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/family/World\\_Fertility\\_and\\_Family\\_Planning\\_20\\_20\\_Highlights.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/family/World_Fertility_and_Family_Planning_20_20_Highlights.pdf).

(and bedroom) can be incredibly difficult.<sup>170</sup> For this committee, it is especially important that solutions aim to educate and improve the participation of willing spouses. Similar to involving community leaders, presenting family planning as a smart economic choice as well as a demonstrable safeguard for the health of wives and mothers may increase the likelihood of spousal support and participation.<sup>171</sup>

Similar to focusing on spousal involvement, improving sexual and health education in schools, prior to marriage, is another way to implement family planning. Sex-ed hugely varies around the world, but whether students are being taught about safe sex, contraception, maternal health, or consent, any kind of education that emphasizes the importance of empowered and safe sexual activity can promote gender equality in and outside of the home and bedroom.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup>Blayo C. Family planning in Europe. *Entre Nous* Cph Den. 1993 Jun;(22-23):3. PMID: 12222242.

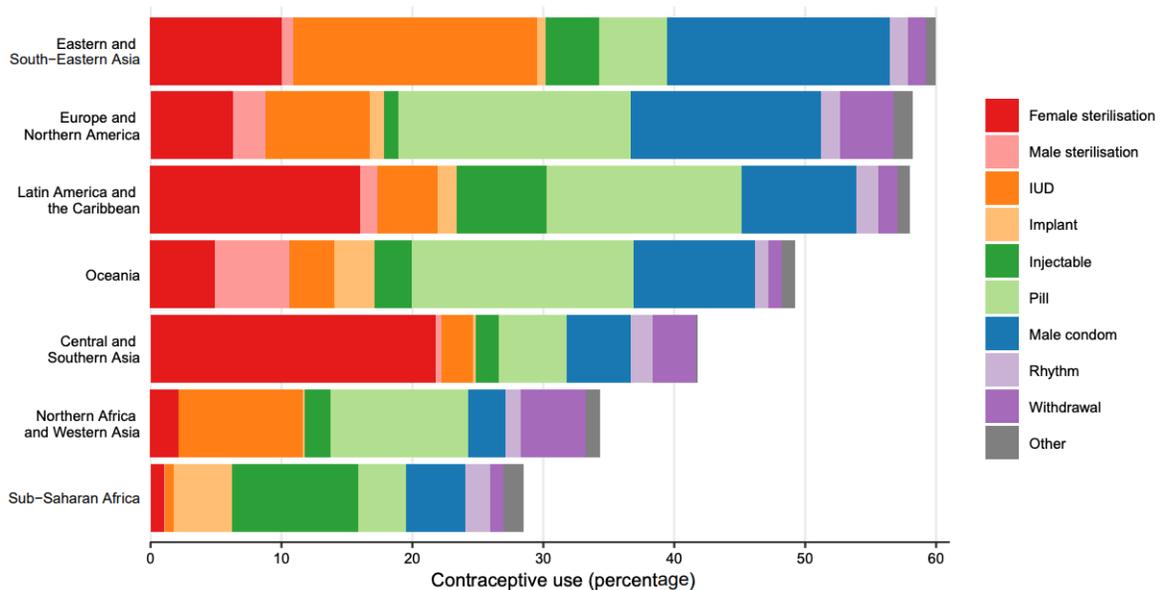
<sup>171</sup>Ibid

<sup>172</sup>Ibid

## Bloc Positions

Family planning practices around the world vary greatly. Although this section breaks down common trends by region, individual nations continue to practice varying degrees of family planning to similarly varying levels of success. However, clear themes of family planning (religious resistance, education as a broader indication of gender equality, levels of socioeconomic development, etc.) are reflected in geographic trends as well.

**Contraceptive use by method among women of reproductive age (15-49 years), by region, 2019**



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019d). *Contraceptive Use by Method 2019: Data Booklet*.

Note: In this figure, Oceania includes Australia and New Zealand.

### Contraceptive Use By Method in 2019<sup>173</sup>

#### Europe

Across continents, Europe has one of the lowest birth rates in the world. These low birth rates can be attributed to two disparate results of successful family planning. Some European countries provide almost entirely unobstructed access to family planning resources and care. Medical contraception is

<sup>173</sup>Ibid

commonly used, with low rates of both abortion and sterilization.<sup>174</sup> Additionally, when sterilization occurs it is an autonomously-made choice and completed in sanitary and sterile conditions. Sterilization is much more common in certain European countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.<sup>175</sup> Abortion is less common in these countries as well.

In other European countries however, it is increasingly difficult to access medical contraceptives (Ireland, for example, as a Catholic country had a total ban on contraception that was overturned in 1980). Separately, many countries who were formerly part of the Communist Bloc have high rates of abortion, many of which are often performed incorrectly, creating a massive safety concern.<sup>176</sup> Prohibition on abortion has had disastrous consequences for maternal health and maternal mortality rates. Efforts in many countries to decriminalize abortion to ensure safe access when necessary has been met with varying degrees of resistance.<sup>177</sup> Despite these challenges to certain aspects of family planning, high levels of gender equality in other aspects of European society have successfully bled over into equality in conversations regarding family planning and contraception. Most resistance to family planning is rooted in religious resistance, rather than a lack of interest in female health and equity.

### ***Japan, South Korea, and Eastern Asian Countries***

Many East Asian Countries, with Japan and South Korea as two primary examples have lowered their birth rates through a series of national campaigns and family planning initiatives. Women in these countries are not likely to have more than one or two children, have safe pregnancies, receive proper medical care before, during, and after pregnancy, and have easy access to contraceptives and family planning care.<sup>178</sup> Abortion and termination of pregnancies, while not overwhelmingly common (a study in Japan from 1988 found that almost 30% of women had received an abortion at some point in her life), are performed safely.<sup>179</sup> South Korea decriminalized abortion in 2021 and has consistently contributed to global initiatives increasing contraceptive access in other countries.<sup>180</sup> Family

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<sup>174</sup>Ibid

<sup>175</sup>Ibid

<sup>176</sup>Ibid

<sup>177</sup>Ibid

<sup>178</sup>Ibid

<sup>179</sup>Ibid

<sup>180</sup>"Family Planning 2030." Family Planning 2030. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://fp2030.org/>.

planning campaigns have commonly been categorized as public health initiatives that improve the wellbeing and success of the collective community.<sup>181</sup>

### ***Sub-Saharan Africa***

Discussions of family planning in African countries are consistently focused on addressing high rates of fertility, that are coupled with similarly high rates of maternal mortality and low rates of contraceptive usage.<sup>182</sup> Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, have the greatest unmet needs for family planning. These needs concern both a lack of education concerning sexual health and limited access to contraception resources that are also in limited supply.<sup>183</sup> However, in recent years married women and couples have successfully begun using contraception and incorporating family planning practices into their lives and relationships. These increasing rates are attributed to improvements in accessibility overall, with improved education and promotion of contraceptive practices as a secondary reason for these increased rates of usage.<sup>184</sup> As more countries commit to providing contraceptive access and supplies, rates of usage are similarly increasing.

### ***Middle East and North African Countries (MENA)***

Increased family planning practices in the MENA region have been promoted in response to concerns about poverty rates and economic success. An increasing number of women and families are using contraceptives although the method varies by country and access. Contraceptive pills are commonly used as well as barrier methods, like condoms.<sup>185</sup> Family planning awareness and contraceptive usage is more common in urban areas, although awareness of family planning is at an all-time high.<sup>186</sup> Religious denial or cultural taboos regarding birth control appear to be decreasing as

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<sup>181</sup>Ibid

<sup>182</sup>Gahungu, Jumaine, Mariam Vahdaninia, and Pramod R. Regmi. "The Unmet Needs for Modern Family Planning Methods among Postpartum Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic Review of the Literature - Reproductive Health." BioMed Central. BioMed Central, February 10, 2021. <https://reproductive-health-journal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12978-021-01089-9>.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid

<sup>184</sup>"Progress in Family Planning in Africa Accelerating: Analysis in 8 ..." Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://gatesinstitute.org/news/progress-family-planning-africa-accelerating-analysis-8-countries-suggests-trends-advancing>.

<sup>185</sup>"Contraceptive Prevalence on Rise in Mena Though at Varying Pace." Family Planning 2030, June 25, 2022. <https://fp2030.org/news/contraceptive-prevalence-rise-mena-though-varying-pace>.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid

contraception continues to become a public, rather than private concern in many of these countries. Still, there is a lack of supply, especially in more rural areas and poorer communities.<sup>187</sup>

### ***South America***

Access to family planning resources and education in many South American countries have greatly increased and improved in the past 50 years. Specifically, modern contraceptive usage has increased and fertility rates have begun decreasing as more families find family planning options that are sustainable for their unique life situations.<sup>188</sup> However, disparities in all facets of family planning access continue to stagnate the region's progress. More recently, concerns about access and resource provision have been the driving factors in national family planning campaigns to overcome these socio-economic differences and disadvantages.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup>Ibid

<sup>188</sup>Fagan T, Dutta A, Rosen J, Olivetti A, Klein K. Family Planning in the Context of Latin America's Universal Health Coverage Agenda. *Glob Health Sci Pract.* 2017 Sep 28;5(3):382-398. doi: 10.9745/GHSP-D-17-00057. PMID: 28765156; PMCID: PMC5620336.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid

## Glossary

**Autonomy** - The express ability to be completely self-controlled or self-governed; entirely independent and free of obstacles to choosing for oneself

**Contraception** - The intentional inhibiting of pregnancy through the use of chemical or barrier methods during sexual intercourse to prevent fertilization of ovum and implantation in the uterus

**Equity** - The recognition that different individuals' circumstances inhibit their ability to achieve or access the same resources and opportunities; finding equality despite unequal initial circumstances

**Family Planning** - The process by which individuals and couples may intentionally choose when and how many children they have, achieved through contraceptive methods

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