

INTRODUCTION

First of all, it is necessary to clarify the difference between forced and arranged marriages.

A marriage is defined as forced when two people are coerced into a marriage against their will and under duress which includes both physical and emotional pressure. This kind of union does not consent the right to refuse, and for this reason it is considerate as a violation against human rights.

In this kind of marriage one or both spouses that do not agree to get married for several reasons, are persuaded through physical, psychological or financial pressure to accept the union.

A variety of reasons stands behind a forced marriage, such as the protection of family honor, a reaction to social pressure, a mean to reduce the level of poverty, the ensure of care for children with disabilities.

Various children are not updated about the marriage and so they're often kidnapped or forced to live their lives in order to get married.

Force and violence are the key features of this typology of unions; victims are often intimidated by abuse, both psychological and sexual in order to avoid any possible escape attempt.

The united Nations considers this typology of union as a violation against human rights, since it limits individual's freedom.

On the other hand, arranged marriage is considered as a type of marital union where the bride and groom are selected by their families (sometimes, a qualified matchmaker may be used). Arranged marriages are not considered as a violation against human rights since both parties are able to agree or refuse, however there's a fine line between consent and coercion.

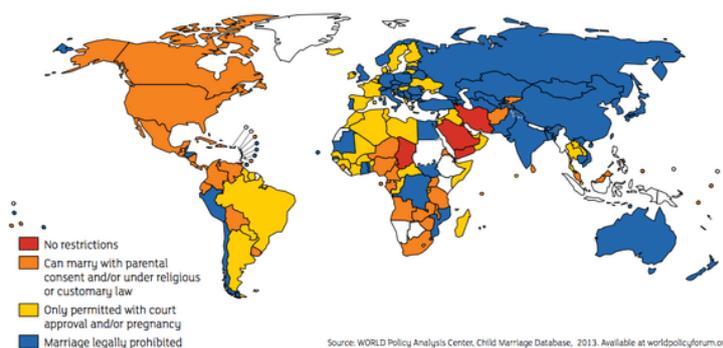
Parents are supposed to respect the wishes of their children, but they're still able to refuse if the future spouse does not meet some requirements; it means that the family take into account reputation, social and ethic values, religious belief and medical history.

[<https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/hub/arranged-marriage-forced-marriage/>]

COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Arranged and forced marriages are most common in developing countries and countries deeply-rooted in folk traditions, but this reality is widespread in other countries such as the USA.

In the following paragraph you could find the 5 countries with the highest percentage of forced (child) marriages, but this issue involves a larger number of countries in the world.



You will find more information in the link below.

1- INDIA

According with UNICEF statistics, the 18% of girls were married by 15, and the 47% by 18. Unluckily girls in India are often seen as a mean to improve the economic condition of the family.

The disparity between men and women is clearly evident in India, where girls are female are considered inferior and relegated to the role of mothers.

One of the key feature in forced marriages in this country is linked to the control of their sexuality; in fact women are often subject of abuse by their husbands, that commit a sexual assault.

Often the minimum age for marriage, 18 for women, is not respect.

The government response was the promotion of a campaign, which had as main aim to stop forced child marriages.

In addition is part of a regional program (SAIEVAC) and a global one (UNFFPA) which are trying to combat the same problematic.

2- BANGLADESH

According with UNICEF statistics, 18% of girls were married by 15, and 56% by 18.

Just like in the Indian country, the improvement of the financial condition is one of the main causes of child marriages, followed by folk traditions.

In Bangladesh the government seems to be deeply involved in the resolution of the issue, in fact many polices have been proposed during recent years.

For example, the minimum age for female marriages was raised from 16 to 18.

Bangladesh is a member of the SAIEVAC, and during the girl summit 2014, the government promised to implement measures to guarantee the protection of children.

On a global level, Bangladesh takes part in the UNICEF's program UNFFPA.

3- NIGERIA

According with UNICEF statistics, 17% of girls were married by 15, and 43% by 18.

In this country, the main drivers to a forced marriage are poverty, traditions and religious believes and the level of school system and education.

Before the Child Rights Act which set the minimum age for marriage at 18, there wasn't any indication by the government.

Nigerian country is step by step improving the conditions of children in the country, by adopting national strategies to put an end to this phenomenon.

4- BRASIL

According with UNICEF statistics, 11% of girls were married by 15, and 36% by 18.

In this country the institution of marriage is not as formal as it is in other countries, since here, many young girls see it as a form of protection, and for this reason consent to informal unions with elder men.

Just like in other states, the improvement of financial conditions plays a leading role in factors which contributes to these unions.

In Brasil the minimum age for marriage is 18, but it could be lowered in case of consent by both parents or in case of a pregnancy after a rape.

Unfortunately, even if this issue in widespread in the country, the government did not take any official policy to solve the issue.

5- ETHIOPIA

According with UNICEF statistics, 16% of girls were married by 15, and 41% by 18.

The key driver of forced unions in this country are the folk and religious traditions, deeply rooted among rural communities.

One of the most common tradition in Ethiopia is the *abusuma*, a forced union between cousins. The lack of an education system and the high level of poverty contributes as well to radicalize this tradition.

Even if the legal age of marriage is 18 for both sexes, the government, due to the lack of means, has no capabilities to punish eventual infringement to the law.

At a global level Ethiopia is part of the UNFPA, a program promoted by UNICEF.

6- USA

According to an article of the Independent over the past 15 years, more than 200,000 children got married in the USA. Even if the minimum age for marriage is 18, in some cases such as pregnancy, children are able to get married, with the consent of their families.

National policies to ban child marriages have been proposed but some politicians and governors refused to adopt them, such as Chris Christie, the governor of New Jersey.

[\[http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/200000-children-married-us-15-years-child-marriage-child-brides-new-jersey-chris-christie-a7830266.html\]](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/200000-children-married-us-15-years-child-marriage-child-brides-new-jersey-chris-christie-a7830266.html)

In order to implement the actions and policies already taken by countries themselves, many NGOs are actively helping these countries. We will now analyze the most important ones.

1. GIRLS NOT BRIDES – [\[http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/\]](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/)

This association cooperate worldwide with 95 countries in order to end the issue of child marriage.

The aim of this NGO is to bring this harmful phenomenon to global attention, so that the MEDCs could contribute to implement the prevention of this radicalized tradition in developing countries.

This association was founded in 2011 by a groups of independent global leaders working for human rights.

2. BREAKTHROUGH – GLOBAL – [\[http://us.breakthrough.tv/\]](http://us.breakthrough.tv/)

This organization, by using arts, media, music and culture, tries to combat against violence and abuses against women and girls, and tries to increase awareness worldwide.

In order to prevent child marriages, they work directly in contact with rural communities in India.

[\[http://16days.thepixelproject.net/16-organisations-working-to-stop-child-marriage/\]](http://16days.thepixelproject.net/16-organisations-working-to-stop-child-marriage/)

OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

Forced and arranged marriages have always been part of the eastern and western countries, but they began being questioned during the 19th century, when the condition of women started improving under various aspects, such as their condition in society and politics. Nowadays, this issue is still affecting many communities worldwide, and the situation is becoming more and more unacceptable. As already mentioned in the introduction, the causes which lead a family to the decision of combining a forced union for the children are various:

- To protect young girl: often, a family going through miserable economic conditions, justify the decision of the forced marriage saying it is made just for the own safety of the daughter,

because once married she would live under the protection of a strong husband, who will provide for her not only physical protection but also economic one.

- To save family honor: sometimes a scandal produced by a relationship between two partners with different religious belief or in more serious cases such as a rape, will convince a family to sacrifice children happiness in order to save the reputation of the family.
- Improve economic condition: when a young girl gets married, her family receives a dowry by the family of the future husband, which, in the majority of cases, consists in an important amount of money, that for poor families could represent a push to improve economic their conditions.

It is important to underline that, even if the majority of victims of forced marriages are women, it is possible for men to also be forced into marry, either a man or a woman for a variety of reasons.

PAST SOLUTIONS

- First off all we have to underline the fact that, according to the Declaration of Human Rights, a woman is free to choose her spouse, since it is a fundamental part to her dignity and her life, as a human being.
[<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>]
- In 1956, the supplementary convention on the abolition of slavery, the slave trade and institutions and practices similar to slavery stated that a woman forced to marry someone without the right to refuse could be compared to slavery.
[<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/SupplementaryConventionAbolitionOfSlavery.aspx>]
- One of the first intervention to solve the matter was promoted by Sierra Leone, which started considering forced marriages (in war) as a crime against humanity in 1969.
- In addition, the first United nations human rights council drafted a resolution against child, early and forced marriages, which considered those unions a violation against human rights.
[http://www.who.int/pmnch/media/events/2014/child_marriage.pdf?ua=1]
- What is more, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention), once again condemned forced marriages as a violation against human rights.
[<https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>]
- Another step forward in the to solve the issue was the introduction in 2009 of the international protecting girls by preventing child marriage act.
- On September 15th, 2014, during the 68th session of the general assembly, a resolution about prevention of child, early and forced marriages worldwide was drafted.
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/pdf/letters/862014Panel%20Discussion%20-%20child_early%20and%20forced%20marriage%20worldwide%20-%206%20August%202014.pdf]

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

One of the most important measure to take in order to solve the issue of arranged and forced marriages is evidently the education of young girls.

It is known that girls coming from communities where the scholar system is inadequate, are most likely to end up in a forced union.

Otherwise, girls that could complete their studies path have more chances to obtain higher qualifications which will permit them to financially support themselves. A free access to long term

education for females is the first step to guarantee them freedom in choosing a partner and not be obliged to take part in a convenience marriage promoted by the family.

Another solution could be the creation of scholarships, assigned by national and international universities to those girls, coming from poor families, who's aim is to change their future conditions.

Secondly, financial help for those families going through an extreme poverty condition is necessary.

In order to prevent those families from selling their daughters to improve their economic situation, international or governmental funds could be created.

What is more, we should promote in every possible way the intervention of NGOs, which operate in lots of poor countries deeply subjected by the problematic.

Last but not least, UN, NGOs and local government must intervene whereas the marriage has already been celebrated, in order to medically and psychologically support the victims; and a team of advocates should be made available for girls wishing to divorce.

Taking in consideration the statement of

[http://historyworld.org/Civilization,%20women_in_patriarchal_societies.htm] ;

“Agricultural civilizations were characteristically patriarchal; that is, they were run by men and based on the assumption that men directed political, economic, and cultural life...”, “...Individual families were normally set up on a patriarchal basis, with the husband and father determining fundamental conditions and making the key decisions, and with humble obedience owed to this male authority. Patriarchal family structure rested on men's control of most or all property, starting with land itself; marriage was based on property relationships and it was assumed that marriage, and therefore subordination to men, was the normal condition for the vast majority of women...”.

With due regard to such claims, it would be useful to understand the importance of improving production systems in countries where agriculture is at the basis of GDP.

EVALUATION OF PAST SOLUTIONS

In spite of all the already adopted measures, the issue has not been solved.

Unfortunately the phenomenon of forced marriages persists in many world areas, in particular the poorest ones.

The resolution of the question of arranged and forced marriages is a goal of the United Nations, and the topic was also included (as an elaboration of the resolution 68/148) in the UN agenda.

Many NGOs are currently working in those countries affected by the issue (as you can see at the section 'countries and organizations') but local traditions and other factors seem to be stronger than the actions of governmental and non-governmental institutions.