Committee: UNICEF (UNITED NATION'S CHILDREN'S FUND)

Country: Republic of Paraguay

 Delegate: Elif Eylül Ateş

Topic: Child Marriage

Child marriage is a marriage or similar union, formal or informal, between a child and an adult or another child under a certain age, typically age eighteen. The vast majority of child marriages are between a girl and a man and are rooted in gender inequality. Although the age of majority and marriageable age are usually designated at age 18, both vary across countries, and therefore the marriageable age may be older or younger in a given country. Even where the age is set at 18 years, cultural traditions may override legislation and many jurisdictions permit earlier marriage with parental consent or in special circumstances. Child marriages have been common throughout history and continue to be fairly widespread, particularly in developing countries such as parts of Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. However, even in developed countries such as the United States legal exceptions mean that 17 US states have no minimum age requirement. The incidence of child marriage has been falling in most parts of the world. 2018 data from UNICEF showed that about 21 percent of young women worldwide were married as children; this is a 25 percent decrease from 10 years previously. The countries with the highest observed rates of child marriages below the age of 18 were Niger, Chad, Mali, Bangladesh, Guinea, the Central African Republic, Mozambique, and Nepal with rates above 50%. Globally, an estimated 12 million girls annually are being married under the age of 18.

History :

Before the industrial revolution, in many parts of the world, including India, China, and Eastern Europe, women tended to marry immediately after reaching puberty, in their mid-teens. Societies, where most of the population lived in small agricultural communities, were characterized by these marriage practices well into the 19th century. Men tended to marry later in societies where a married couple was expected to establish a household of their own.

**CHILD MARRIAGE IN PARAGUAY**

22% of girls in Paraguay are married or in a union by their 18th birthday and 4% are married or in a union before the age of 15. Child, Early, and Forced Marriage and Unions (CEFMU) are most prevalent in Alto Paraguay, Alto Paraná, Asunción, and Resto and among indigenous and Guarani speaking communities. In Paraguay, most unions are informal, rather than a formal marriage.

Child marriage

In 2015 amending articles 17 and 20 of the Civil Code raised the age of consent to marriage to 18 years old for both sexes, although minors may marry from the age of 16 with the consent of their parents, their guardians, or a judge. Before the amendment, the age of consent was 14 for girls and 16 for boys. Child marriage is not automatically void but a court can order the annulment of the marriage if requested. Besides, according to Art 149 of the Civil Code, if a minor gets married without the consent of his/her parents or legal guardian, the matrimonial property regime applicable by default is the separation of property. This is clear evidence that early marriage is very common in Paraguay. Indeed, the rate of people married before the age of 18 is 18%. In rural areas, children are married earlier than those in urban areas. Teen pregnancy is also a very common phenomenon in Paraguay and young women are nowadays more likely to have a child during adolescence than were teens during the 1970s. This phenomenon has an important impact on a girl's health as nearly 20% of adolescent female deaths in Paraguay are attributable to complications of pregnancy or childbirth.

 **SOLUTION**

**In recent years child marriage has gained increasing prominence on international and national development agendas. Today, we have a unique opportunity to act on this momentum and accelerate our efforts to help change the lives of girls and young women all over the world.**

**Ending child marriage requires work across all sectors and at all levels. It requires us to understand the complex drivers behind the practice in different contexts and adapt our interventions accordingly.**

**Ending child marriage also requires increased, targeted investments from both international donors and governments in high prevalence countries. The funding that is currently available is nowhere near large enough to match the scale of child marriage worldwide.**

**1) Empower girls with information, skills, and support networks**

**2) Provide economic support and incentives to girls and their families**

**3) Educate and rally parents and community members**

**4) Enhance girls' access to a high-quality education**

**5) Encourage supportive laws and policies. For the next generation of development programs to make ending child marriage a priority, policymakers must pay attention to these strategies while continuing to test innovative approaches and evaluation techniques.**