



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

Agenda Item: Abolishing Child Marriages

Country: United Kingdom

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, commonly known as the United Kingdom (UK) or Britain, is a country in Northwestern Europe, off the coast of the continental mainland. The UK had an estimated population of over 68.2 million people in 2023. The capital and largest city of both England and the UK is London. The cities of Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast are the national capitals of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its currency is pound sterling. The borders of UK also contains the town of Greenwich which is the start of the time zone.

Child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child. Child marriage is often the result of entrenched gender inequality, making girls disproportionately affected by the practice. Globally, the prevalence of child marriage among boys is just one sixth that among girls. One of the main problems that countries have seen in their communities is early pregnancy, the language barrier and child marriage. Women are not allowed to study either because they have the idea that they must stay at home. However, that idea must change because women and men have the same rights.

Child marriage robs girls of their childhood and threatens their well-being. Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence and less likely to remain in school. They have worse economic and health outcomes than their unmarried peers, which are eventually passed down to their own children, straining a country's capacity to provide quality health and education services.

Across the UK there are many laws that exist to ensure that children are protected from risk of harm. Children up to the age of 18 cannot vote, leave education, purchase fireworks and so forth. Yet they were not protected from child marriage, which often places a child at a significantly increased risk of domestic abuse, early pregnancy and compromises their emotional and intellectual development.

Child marriage has too often been viewed as a 'developing world issue' that doesn't affect Britain. The reality is, Child Marriage is present in every single area of the UK. Since 2017 UK's National Helpline for Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage has responded to over 400 cases relating to child marriage. This does not even reflect the true scale of the problem, as it only shows the cases where victims have been able to reach out for support. In order to

solve this issue UK takes measures that are about making new legislations, implementing online education programs and raising funds.

The United Kingdom is a global leader in ending violence against women and girls, the government contributed £21 million to organisations that work to end violence against women and to eradicate child marriages. The United Kingdom has supported nine countries (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Uganda and Zambia) in developing action plans to end child marriage, reaching over 1.2 million girls since 2015.

The previous laws failed to recognise how important child marriage problem is and makes children believe that getting married young is something to be desired and ‘celebrated’.

Thus, after ten years of campaigning, on the 27th April 2022 the UK government passed a Bill to end child marriage in England and Wales. The new Bill will make it illegal for a person to arrange the marriage of a person under the age of 18 in England and Wales. The new law will automatically make any marriage that is arranged for a child under 18, on account of their age, a forced marriage.

UK's presence on this issue is; those who act to manipulate children into marrying under-age will rightly face the full force of the law. UK underlines that child marriage destroys lives and through the efficient implementations millions of boys and girls will be protected over the coming years from this scourge. UK also indicates that forced marriage is an abuse of human rights which denies vulnerable children the freedom to learn, grow and thrive. Like all other forms of abuse, UK is committed to stamping out this exploitative practice.

In addition to this dedication, UK will be also continuing to provide training and guidance to equip the police, social workers and other frontline professionals to support and safeguard victims.

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