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GEC Model United Nations

UNICEF
Harmful Traditional Practices
on Female Children



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Letters from the Chairs

Hello delegates!

My name is Faustina Jien and I am a grade 12 student from Thai-Chinese International School. I am so honored to be chairing the UNICEF Committee, thus I hope we could all have a fruitful debate! I wish that all of the delegates would learn something and have some fun during this conference. I am looking forward to meeting you all!

Heyo esteemed delegates,

Welcome to GECMUN V UNICEF! My name is Sylvia Chen, and I am a senior from the Thai Chinese International School located in Bangkok. I am super excited to chair for this committee and to spend an amazing time with you all. Don't hesitate and feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. I will be more than happy to answer your questions. :) Hope you can gain a lot of experiences from this conference!

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Best Regards,

Faustina Jien and Sylvia Chen

Introduction

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is trying to better the lives of children in need in different parts of the world. We all share a common goal of advocating the protection of children's rights, and to help meet their basic needs. We hope all delegates prepare and understand their countries' background information thoroughly, in order to be able to yield an effective solution. The UNICEF was established in 1964 to provide food, healthcare, and clothing to help those in need after World War II in Europe. Now, UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to better children's lives.

In GECMUN V, we will be discussing the topic of harmful traditional practices on female children. Throughout the world, there are issues regarding child marriage, female genital mutilation, honour killings, and violence against women and girls. There are countless countries that are exploiting children due to religious or traditional beliefs that need to be put to an end. According to the 2011 Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) report, 23% of female children aged 0 to 14 years experienced FGM/C (female genital mutilation or cutting) nationally on average, as compared to 37.7 (EDHS: 2005) and 51.9% (Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2000). The number has been decreasing since the year 2005 and 2000. The report also shows that FGM/C is more practiced in rural areas at 24% than urban areas which stood in 2011 at 15%. Child marriage is another big traditional practice that UNICEF aims to end in order to help children in need.

Definition of Key Terms

CHILD MARRIAGE

An underaged individual going through the process of marriage.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The physical punishment of people, especially children, by hitting them.

FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

Showing strength and confidence from women and girls.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION OR CUTTING

An act where females undergo a procedure to mutilate their genitals.

HONOUR KILLINGS

When a woman brings shame to a family, the men have the right to murder them in order to bring honor back to the family.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Physical and/or mental harm that affects women and girls.

Historical Background

Children, especially young females, have been constantly exposed to danger of being raped, kidnapped, experiencing physical and mental violence, early marriage, labor, and much more. Abuse and neglect is a reality for millions of children, especially the Middle Eastern countries where it has been reported to have the highest number of cases of child violence occurring. The UNICEF has made many approaches to protecting children rights throughout the years. Yet, there are more challenges ahead. Many children in developing countries are not in primary school and the majority of them are girls. Millions of children are severely or moderately malnourished or die every year of easily preventable causes. Children are harmed increasingly in punitive systems of juvenile justice. Many unwanted children languish in orphanages and other institutions, denied education and adequate health care. Hundreds of millions of children are engaged in some form of labour. Armed conflicts around the globe continue to shorten and ruin the lives of millions of children, and they still serve as soldiers in national armies.

On 20 November 1959 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Declaration of the Rights of the Child during the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The drought crisis 2012 in the Sahel was one of the biggest challenges. More than 18 million people faced food insecurity in the region. An estimated 1.1 million children were in danger of death. By the end of September, UNICEF had reached more than 730,000 severely malnourished children under 5 with life-saving treatment. In Pakistan, more than 100,000 children and women affected by flooding and insecurity received help and protection. UNICEF responded to renewed violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where, in 2012, the number of internally displaced persons was the highest it had been since 2009. More than 3,000 separated children were reunited with caregivers.

Recently, there is a practice called female genital mutilation. Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) is a procedure that intentionally alters or causes injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The reason for these practices is generalized into 5 categories: psychosexual reasons, sociological and cultural reasons, hygiene and aesthetic reasons, religious reasons, or socio-economic reasons. This practice is mostly carried out by traditional people. On the other hand, child marriage is caused by similar reasons as well as for financial issues throughout the affected countries. Furthermore, honor killings are mostly related to religious and social standards that result in a bloodbath. The practice of FGM shows gender inequality in society. FGM is carried out as a way to control women's sexuality. It is thought to ensure virginity before marriage and fidelity afterward, and to increase male sexual pleasure. FGM is seen as part of a girl's initiation into womanhood and as an intrinsic part of a community's cultural heritage. In some communities, the external female genitalia are considered dirty and ugly and are removed, ostensibly to promote hygiene and aesthetic appeal. Although FGM is not endorsed by either Islam or by Christianity, supposed religious doctrine is often used to justify the practice. In many communities, FGM is a prerequisite for marriage.

Child marriage, defined as marriage of a child under 18 years of age, is a silent and yet widespread practice. A lot of female children were forced into marriage by their family. Many of the reasons were due to poverty, the perception that marriage will provide “protection”, social norms, family honor, or religious practices. The act of child marriage is a human rights violation, over 60 million marriages include girls under the age of 18 today.

Honour Killing are committed within families or social groups with the purpose of controlling behaviour. Such murders are carried in the name of proteReasons given for this can include refusing an arranged marriage, entering a relationship with someone disapproved of, renouncing faith and behaving or dressing in a way thought to be inappropriate. Even though both male and female are targeted, female are more commonly targeted.

Stances of Major Parties

USA

The United States is a diverse country that has people from different parts of the world living there. In the United States of America, the Federal Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act was under consideration by the House of Representatives in early 1995. The United States have acknowledged the importance of education and awareness to service providers. There have also been countless incidents in the US regarding honor killings and violence against women.

RUSSIA

Girls in Russia undergo mutilation in early age, up to three years old. The practice has been publicly approved in the predominantly Muslim region of Dagestan by religious leaders. Girls were falling victim to violence every year and faced cruel treatment from their own relatives. Many cases of female genital mutilation and children trafficking happened in Russia. In 2013, the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) found that Russia had done little to implement the recommendations of protecting women from violence. The main obstacle to effective response to violence against women in Russia is the absence of a federal public policy that defines the problem as a serious impediment to the observance and achievement of women’s rights as human rights.

FRANCE

In France, there aren’t any specific laws regarding the issue. However, the Penal code was implemented to prosecute people who exercise violence or serious assault to a child under 15. The Criminal Division of the Cour de cassation decided, by a judgement in 20 August 1983, that wilful violence or mutilation with any parts of a female’s body would be prosecuted under the article 312-3 of the Penal Code. While the term “female genital mutilation” is not used in the Penal Code, this decision makes it quite clear that such practices fall within the purview of the enactment.

UNITED KINGDOM

In the United Kingdom, the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act was adopted in 1985. Measures against FGM have also been included in the child protection procedures at local authority levels.

CHINA

Committees in the UN are trying to raise awareness of the issue within China, and are working on taking actions and strengthening judicial protection for female victims.

GERMANY

According to women's rights organisation, Terre des Femmes, in 2014 there were 25,000 victims in Germany and a further 2,500 are under threat of becoming mutilated.

CANADA

In Canada, people have been trying to raise more awareness and providing training and advice to service providers such as midwives, health visitors, nurses, doctors, teachers and social workers.

SOUTH KOREA

South Korea has many cases of crime performed on young girls in regards to kidnap, rape, bullying, and violence. South Korea is also known for a high rate of suicide among their younger generations because of academic stress and pressure from society. There are many crimes committed in South Korea because of their highly unstable mental health, in which young females become one of their targets.

PHILIPPINES

A project in the Philippines focused on educating young men (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Asia Pacific 2006), while a number of other community and legal strategies have been tried or canvassed (Hughes 2004).

NIGERIA

Nigeria has had multiple cases regarding harmful traditional practices. The Anti-Child Abuse Society of Africa (ACASA) in Nigeria works to raise awareness about different forms of child abuse, campaigns against the inhuman treatment of children, and fights against and traditional harmful practices. There have been cases such as child marriage, child abuse, child labour, etc. Nigeria has since expressed statements to try eliminating FGM and other harmful practices to children.

TURKEY

The number of child abuse victims in Turkey has increased 33 percent in the last four years, and increased human trafficking has led to a rise in child prostitution. Even though the Turkish government has introduced programs to protect women and in 2012 enacted domestic violence legislation, the laws are not enforced and actions to protect children were minimally performed.

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is a nation that upholds principles of equality between men and women, and prohibits discrimination against women. The law was implemented to protect the legal rights of women and to stop violence and repression against them.

VIETNAM

Vietnam has been a child rights pioneer for over 25 years. The recent enactment of the Child Law by Vietnam's National Assembly attempts to make a breakthrough in the protection of children from violence by an approach that covers both the prevention of violence and responding to violence. However, the Child Law only considers a child to be someone under 16. This leaves 16-18 year olds unprotected. UNICEF is therefore calling for the age of the Child Law to be raised to 18.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia takes children protections seriously and has emerging child protection services, such as Child Helpline and child maltreatment prevention programs. Yet, to date there are still no specific criminal laws addressing child abuse and neglect (CAN) in Saudi Arabia. Cases of significant physical or sexual assaults are referred to law enforcement officials for investigation, and only serious criminal cases are prosecuted in court based on General Criminal Bylaw.

AFGHANISTAN

Forced migration in Afghanistan disrupts communities and often results in the victimization of children and adolescents through early marriage. Existing protection services are inadequate, especially in remote and in warring communities. There is widespread failure to promote and protect the rights of children. To protect and provide services to Afghan children, UNICEF has worked with the government of Afghanistan to set up the Child Protection Action Network (CPAN).

SOMALIA

Somalia is one of the world's poorest countries and also one of the least protective environments for children. The administration and local institutions are unable to provide children with an adequate protective environment that safeguards their rights. Somali children have become increasingly vulnerable to all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. The Somali Parliament approved the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 2014 setting the stage for children's access to their rights.

IRAN

Children's lives are mired in difficulty in Iran, just like other countries in the Middle Eastern area. Major gaps existed in the protection of children's basic rights. There has been multiple cases regarding honor killings as well. Recently, there is a new bill being discussed in parliament that would overhaul Iran's child protection laws to better protect kids from abuse.

UGANDA

Without legislation that protects children, the Government is unable to provide adequate and gender-appropriate care and protection of girls and boys harmed or at risk of exploitation, violence and abuse. To keep Ugandan children safe, UNICEF is working with the Government and partners to prevent and respond to violence against children and women.

BURKINA FASO

Despite having quite a few incidents of FGM happening in the country of Burkina Faso, they are one of the top nations that are trying to eliminate female genital mutilation. Burkina Faso has also enforced quite a few laws regarding the protection of women. However, not all punishments were carried out due to some difficulties within prosecution.

ISRAEL

In 2002, the Ministry of Welfare and the Municipality established a Child Protection Center in Jerusalem within whose walls everything necessary for dealing quickly, efficiently and compassionately with abused children takes place. The child protection legislative framework for child maltreatment, including the 'Youth (Care and Supervision) Law', and the 'Mandatory Reporting Law' are additional topics addressed herein.

THAILAND

The Royal Thai government has been active in creating new laws and regulations for child protection, but laws primarily apply to those who are Thai, which means that over 300,000 children residing from neighboring countries are unaccounted for. As Thailand continues to urbanize and cities attract people from rural areas across the country, there will be a greater influx of children moving in and out of provinces, making it even more critical to establish a secure system of child protection that ensures the rights of all vulnerable children.

EGYPT

In Egypt, there was a case regarding a doctor being convicted of carrying out FGM. Sohair al-Bata'a, 13, died at the hands of Raslan Fadl in 2013, although Fadl still denies performing the operation that killed her. Her case prompted outrage among both local and international observers, seen as a rare opportunity for conviction for a practice that is widespread despite being officially banned in Egypt in 2008. Egypt has later on expressed that female genital mutilation needs to be eliminated.

ETHIOPIA

The practice of female genital mutilation has been happening in different parts of Ethiopia. There have been a non-profit organization called KMG has made some progress in stopping this harmful practice. However, there are still people in Ethiopia who support this idea. In Ethiopia as a whole, 74 percent of women and girls were mutilated out of a population of 94 million, according to 2005 statistics.

NORWAY

Norway alerted all hospitals in 1985 to the practices of female genital mutilation. While there aren't any specific laws implemented, Norway still wants to provide as much aid as possible. However, educating people about FGM continues to be a key policy for Norway. Norway also enforced the law of making sure those that commit crimes such as genital mutilation would have to go to prison for at least 6 years.



Solutions

EXPAND SANCTIONS

With reinforcing the law and expanding sanctions, this could result in making sure these people learn from their mistakes. The sanctions could also be strengthened and make sure individual nations follow through with the punishments. If their wrongdoings were too severe, they could end up being executed.

EDUCATION TO ALL MALES

Most of the crimes committed on female children were performed by males. By educating all males about female and violence, we hope to decrease the rate of children violence happening. Alongside educating them the incorrect traditions that result in murders or females getting hurt.

CHILDREN/FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

Empowering females and children is crucial due to the amount of female being afraid of men. Encouraging them would possibly result in them standing up to the abuser. Educating female and letting them know they're worth it is crucial.
issue.

Questions to Consider

- What do the criminals gain from performing harmful practices to female children? What are their intentions?
- What is considered child abuse and neglect in my country? How does my country define child abuse and neglect?
- What is the social status of female in your country's society? Are there gender inequalities?
- Who typically abuses children?
- What are the existing children protection sanctions in your country and how can we improve? And what solutions did other countries find that we could use of?

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