

LatinMUN 2025

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

**Combating Forced Marriages and Ensuring
Reproductive Rights**

Committee Background

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the main global organism in charge of promoting and ensuring the successful implementation of women's and girl's rights investing more than 360 million dollars to help this cause. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's and girls' rights, documenting the reality of their lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

During the commission's annual 2-week long session international representatives from all over the world, civil organizations and other UN entities gather at the UN headquarters in New York, to discuss all the process and controversies regarding gender gaps. Attenders to this event also take actions to accelerate the progress and awareness of women's rights.

In its early years (1946-1956), the CSW focused on issues such as work rights, family law, and women's participation in political life. Over time, its scope expanded to include a wide range of topics from health, education, economic rights, violence against women, to the environment. The CSW provides a platform for UN member states, civil society organizations, and women's rights advocates to collaborate, share experiences, and develop policies that promote gender equality.

Today, the CSW remains an essential part of the UN, its annual sessions serving as a critical space for international dialogue and policy development on gender equality. Its meetings provide an opportunity for UN member states to assess progress on women's rights, share best practices, and identify challenges that need to be addressed at the global, regional, and national levels. The CSW continues to work closely with citizen organizations, women's networks, and gender experts to ensure that women's voices are heard in global discussions. CSW reveals more than 81,000 cases of women that were where killed and otherwise would be silenced forever.

In 1996, ECOSOC in resolution 1996/6 (see p. 20) expanded the Commission's mandate and decided that it should take a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities.

In summary, the CSW has been at the vanguard of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment for over seven decades and will continue to do so for a long time.

Topic Background:

Forced marriage is a form of violence against victims that involves sexual violations and the disappearance of fundamental rights. This affects the long-term physical, and mental health of them as victims, the lack of privacy in their lives, and even the absence of their own autonomy and freedom. This unfortunate action happens both to women and men. Forced marriage may be considered as it, when there is force, and fraud involved during the process of marriage. Another factor that makes forced marriage happen is when one or both partners are not in agreement or did not give any consent to marry. In this case, consent means that there was an informed and consistent agreement in order to marry. The consequences of experiencing forced marriage are the presence of sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence, and as mentioned, the scarcity of human rights. Forced marriage can happen to people of any race, religion, gender, economic status, and even origin. Some signs that may relate to a forced marriage or being involved in a case of one are;

- You feel that you have no say, no right of change to whom you marry.
- You are feeling threatened by your partner if you leave them.
- You are afraid of saying something negative, the word "no".
- You feel closely monitored or like a puppet when being with you partner

- You cannot consent to any documents, or decisions made at the time of marriage.

This entire topic was covered and normalized by citizens until the late 18th century in which victims started to report and speak up about being forced marriage victims. Not to be confused with arranged marriage which is when parents, or in general family make up a marriage for a benefit.

Reproductive rights include the legal access to contraception methods, fertility control, reproductive health, and access to your reproductive health services. Reproductive rights also involve the people's freedom to decide about what the individual believes their body is capable of. Safe childbirth and pregnancy care are two situations in which these rights are not very protected and complied. More than 50 countries have restricted abortions and even contraceptive methods which at a long-term cost, it harms the women's health. It depends on the country's decision on whether to ban it completely or partially. This can be classified as partially for cases such as health, rape, incest, or fetal abnormality.

Most of these countries that either completely or partially ban abortion are in South America, and in Africa. Andorra, Laos, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and San Marino are known to have very strict abortion laws. It all started in the 19th century, 1848 to be specific where the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention began the rights process, and support. This movement is also, and most known as feminism. As an example of a change that some movements have made is Roe v. Wade agreement in which abortion was legal and women and their reproductive rights were protected and secured by the United States' government.

The global view and general opinion about reproductive rights is a factor that is contributing to the decision that will be taken. 56% of the world believe that abortion should be legal, while 28% believe that it won't. In countries such as Sweden, and France, most citizens believe that reproductive rights should be protected. While in Indonesia, and Malaysia, most citizens don't believe rights should be respected. The generational division and cultural beliefs between each generation also makes a difference since the Baby Boomer generation (born in 1945-1964) is the most likely to be against the complying of these rights. In countries such as Japan, 46% of the population have a neutral opinion about abortion. This means that they don't either support or oppose the protection of reproductive rights.

Jasvinder Sanghera, 16 year old who was severely forced to marry someone that her parents chose for her. It was common for her ancestors and for her surrounding community that this unfortunate action would and should happen. She states how her male family members such as her brother had more of a say, of an opinion regarding general matters and opinions. She says he had more freedom of expression, freedom of speech than she had. This is just an example on how one problem regarding women's freedom, correlates to the action of forced marriage. Several factors such as emotional blackmail, mental abuse, social pressure, and in other cases physical violence, sexual violence (rape, abuse), are some reasons on why this action is not accepted by the common society. Many movements have focused or acted against the interests and general making of forced marriages which have made serious changes regarding this topic.

Countries such as the United Kingdom made forced marriage a criminal offense with a seven year penalty in prison. The United States has various laws, protections, and

regulations that prevent and treat forced marriage, the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act helps, and protects vulnerable women. India prohibited Child marriage in 2006, which also includes various forced marriage enforcements. Various countries offer facilities for those who suffered from this abuse. These facilities include shelter, education, legal protection, and hotlines in order to report.

Current Situation

Forced marriage is a topic that may sound like an old story topic, but unfortunately it is still going on nowadays. In South Africa, 14% of women marry before the age of 18, 5% of general marriages seem to be forced, or they have allegations that state to be forced or not consented. Each country has its own general culture, and beliefs regarding that topic. Gender norms, values, stereotypes, and many more factors affect female obedience in many countries. Societal stigma and social pressure for women to marry is common in many parts of the world. Families or communities facing or dealing with economic pressures, and distress, might force one of their family members to marry in order to take those struggles away.

Azerbaijan recently signed an amendment in which it established that marriage is now legal until the age of 18, which is now their minimum age of consent for marriage. This was signed on June 28, 2024. Regarding Azerbaijan and other nations, abduction and torture for marriage, also called as “Bride Kidnapping”, is a practice that violates and captures a woman or girl in order to marry. This practice happens mostly in European, and Asian countries.

For the Taliban, women or girls over the age of 12 are not allowed to go to school or conclude with their academic studies. a 19-year-old Afghan woman was forced and

violated in order to marry. She states that armament and weapons were present while she went to order legal help regarding the case. This is just an example to visualize how these cases still go on nowadays. In order to combat this, the Forced Marriage in Domestic Legislation Database, is a series of data that has been noted for almost four years, and in which cases and events regarding this unfortunate event happen. This series of data shows that 99% of countries have yet to tackle forced marriage since it's not eradicated yet.

Advocacy and support has been shown and made by the entire world. The series of data mentioned above is supported by the 193 UN members as it combats domestic abuse, and forced marriage. 98% of these countries have found a way to tackle or address non-consensual marriage. These ways mainly focus on;

- All nations have international obligations under at least one international treaty to address consent to marriage, establish a minimum age for marriage, or tackle forced marriage, servile marriage or marriage trafficking.
- 41% of nations appear not to have established legal sanctions against those that force others into marriages.
- Only 29 nations (15%) appear to have established legal protections against the continuation or maintenance of a forced marriage.
- 52 nations (27%) appear not to have put in place legal provisions to protect the right to consent to marriage.
- 159 nations (82%) appear not to have established legal prohibition of servile marriage.
- 57 nations (30%) appear not to have specifically prohibited trafficking for the purpose of practices similar to slavery, servile marriage, or forced marriage.
- Although virtually all States have national laws establishing a minimum age for marriage, marriages of children under the age of 18 years are permitted in 119 countries (62%). Provisions were found allowing marriages as young as nine years.

- 158 nations (82%) appear to have exceptions in place allowing marriages below the country's standard minimum age.
- The consequences of laws protecting against child, early, and forced marriage are often extremely limited, enabling the voiding or annulment of the marriage but providing no other remedies for victims and survivors.

Regarding reproductive rights, latest news regarding the new American government and their actions state that about 11.7 women and girls will lose access to contraceptive methods, and \$600 million (dollars) were frozen for American topics including reproductive health, and family planning services. 70% of the reproductive budget in the US will be going to several different topics as the new government doesn't necessarily believe in reproductive health having such a large budget, and impact on the American economy. This decision not only affects the American government, and citizens, it affects several other countries that rely on the U.S.A in order to get their supplies.

"Because no one is providing services now, entire health systems have just ground to a halt." That is what was mentioned at the Frontline Club in the United Kingdom.

Performer Countries: Countries that take a big part in the development of this topic.

Zambia is one of the few countries in Africa that permit and accept abortion. In Africa, it's not very common to get attention in that field since economic and cultural factors and influences don't permit it. Zambia is an example of how the economic situation of a nation is an obstacle, but doesn't limit them from having medical attention and assistance in 55% of the rural areas. These rates are very positively distanced from other countries since most countries both developed and developing countries, rarely offer medical assistance in rural areas. This decision was taken since in Zambia, 30% of maternal deaths were caused by complications and trials of damage to the women's own body, and to the baby.

Honduras: One of the countries with the most strict guidelines and laws regarding abortion and pregnancy prevention methods. Most of these have been banned since 1985, but in 2021 the law was still supported and enforced more than ever. This action took to neighboring countries such as El Salvador, and Nicaragua, to also prohibit some of these methods.

France: In 2024, they supported abortion rights. They had over 80% on general approbation of this support. They have been supporting these rights for over 45 years which has made the country more liberal and more conscious regarding that topic.

Conclusion

In general the situation many women are facing is something horrific, they are being forced to be married forcefully to anyone their family notices as worth or whoever gives them the most benefits.

Forced marriages take away lots of rights women have been fighting for a long time. Violence, abuse, and harassment are events victims have to go through every step of their life. As this event is not happening as much as it used to happen some time ago, it is still occurring nowadays, and should be considered as an unethical practice.

Reproductive rights are fundamental, necessary rights women have been fighting for a long time, since some nations, states, and in general people, don't consider it as something very important or primordial for a woman's wellbeing and decision making for their bodies. Nowadays, lots of people, and countries have started to make these rights more of a priority which has obviously positively affected women, but it is still a problem the committee should combat.

Delegates should take actions immediately to prevent forced marriages and other horrendous activities that don't respect women's rights from taking place and from ever re-emerging in the near future as a threat to all women and their rights.

Guiding Questions

1. How can the CSW ensure these rights in places where they aren't very promoted and complied?
2. Is there a way to help women with their rights and freedoms and at the same time don't harm their health
3. How can the committee eradicate forced marriages in developing countries?
4. Is there a way to stop the general stereotype that marriages should be forced?
5. How can the committee classify forced marriage as forced, obligated marriage?
6. How can the committee achieve ways to have planned parenthood?
7. How can forced marriage norms and policies (not laws) be more effective?

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