



TQO The Abolition of Child Marriages

Child marriage is a formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18, to another child or most commonly an adult.

Even though this tradition has become less practiced throughout the years, child marriage is still an issue in many countries to this day, with approximately one in five girls married in childhood across the globe. Girls forced into marriage are often pulled out of school, limiting their future opportunities, and contributing to an ongoing cycle of poverty. Early pregnancies, common in child marriages, increase poor health and in the worst cases, death. These marriages also expose girls to domestic violence and psychological trauma, robbing them of their childhoods.

This harmful tradition is most common in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and parts of the Middle East. Countries like Niger, Chad, Bangladesh, and Mali have some of the highest rates of child marriage globally. In Niger, for example, 76% of girls are married before turning 18. In South Asia, India has the highest number of child brides due to its large population, while other countries like Nepal and Afghanistan also struggle with high rates of early marriage. Conflict-affected regions, including parts of the Middle East, see a rise in child marriages as families resort to marrying off daughters for financial or social stability amidst conflict.

To tackle the widespread issue of child marriage, international organizations like the United Nations (UN), along with key partners such as UNICEF and UNFPA, have focused on both preventing and ending the practice. The UN has played a crucial role in promoting legal reforms that set the minimum marriage age at 18 and advocating for stronger enforcement of such laws, particularly in regions with the highest prevalence of child marriages, such as parts of Africa and South Asia. By working with local governments, communities, and advocacy groups, the UN aims to change cultural beliefs of early marriage and provide girls with alternatives like education. In partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Girls Not Brides, these efforts also emphasize raising awareness of the harms of child marriage, supporting girls' access to education, and informing families. These collaborative efforts are essential for shifting attitudes and reducing child marriage worldwide.

TQO The Abolition of Polio

In 1988, the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution to eradicate polio worldwide, leading to the establishment of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). This initiative was led by national governments in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), Rotary International, the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and UNICEF. Later, it was joined by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Since its launch, global polio cases have been reduced by 99%, bringing the world close to becoming polio-free, marking the second time in history that a human disease could be eradicated globally, following the eradication of smallpox in 1980.

To completely eradicate polio, every child in every household must be vaccinated, but thousands of children are still missing the polio vaccine. In regions where polio remains widespread, such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, efforts to eliminate the disease face challenges, including security concerns, misinformation, and transportation difficulties. Due to certain pandemics such as COVID-19, many procedures have been put to a stop. To address these issues, organisations have collaborated with local leaders and community influencers to bring trust and promote vaccines. Additionally, advancements like geographic mapping and the deployment of mobile health teams have played a critical role in reaching children in remote or previously inaccessible areas.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/poliomyelitis#:~:text=Polio%20is%20a%20highly%20infectious,in%20a%20matter%20of%20hours>

<https://www.rotary.org/en/our-causes/ending-polio>

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1156041>

TQO The Forced Separation of Asylum-Seeking Families

The forced separation of asylum-seeking families is a persistent issue that highlights the complexities and challenges of immigration policies worldwide. This practice, often implemented as part of strict border control measures, involves the separation of children from their parents or guardians upon their arrival at a country's borders. While governments justify these actions as necessary for enforcing immigration laws or protecting children from potential trafficking, the emotional and psychological affect on families cannot be overlooked.

Children subjected to forced separation face significant trauma, as they are abruptly removed from their families and placed in detention centres or foster systems. Studies have shown that this can lead to mental health issues in the not only the youth but the parents in the families as well. Many families have already suffered extreme violence in their native countries and journeys to safety. This disruption of families lives undermines the core purpose of asylum seeking, which is to seek safety and protection from persecution.

The UN and various international organisations have been effective in addressing the forced separation of asylum-seeking families. Organisations like the UNHCR and UNICEF have consistently called for the preservation of families, urging governments to prioritise families lives. Human rights groups, such as Amnesty International, also document and expose the issue, pressuring governments for accountability and policy change. International human rights organisations have condemned the practice, arguing that it violates fundamental rights mentioned in treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite this, some nations continue to prioritise border security over family unity, reflecting an issue between governmental control and humanitarian obligations.